



by Masterless Sword

Kingdom's Bloodline



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WANG GUO
XUE MAI

王国血脉

无主之剑◎

作为新世界的穿越者，李华第一切忌理工男作风，二不是兵王杀手，三做假芯片系统

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Kingdom's Bloodline

– Wang Guo Xue Mai –

- Volume 1 -

**-Author-
Masterless Sword**

[EndlessFantasy Translation (Qidian International)]

- STORY -

A lowly child beggar, a noble prince, a monster viewed as the enemy of the entire world. If you possess all three identities at the same time, which identity would you choose to help you earn a better ending?

Thales did not have the answer.

He only knew that he came to a different and magnificent world, and he had to face a future that was as difficult to handle as a nightmare.

The glorious Empire had already been destroyed for one thousand years, the dying royal family suffered many problems, the legendary sacred battle had plenty of conspiracies, the divided world was in chaos.

But Thales had nothing.

The only thing he had left was an unswerving determination to preserve his own identity, bravery which would allow him to survive in a perilous situation, and a belief that he would never submit to principles he did not believe.

“A King does not gain respect by virtue of his bloodline. The bloodline’s glory rests on the deeds of the King.”

Darkness will baptize light. Fire will create true steel. The forbidden prince’s story starts here.

Chapter 1

Beggar

Arc 1: Return of the Blood

"That is why Baudrillard considers 'things' and 'requirements' as false symbols. He criticized Marx's labor theory of value¹, believing he had fallen into the trap of capitalism and political economy. He then even proposed his own idea of political economy." Wu Qiren finished his presentation. He opened up his last slide and nodded his thanks to the teacher and his classmates. Upon the teacher's signal, he left the podium and awaited the next classmate's presentation.

"Thales!"

The next moment, former postgraduate student Wu Qiren woke up from his dream.

He was curled up, lying in a cold hollowed-out hole in the wall. He could feel the cold wind blowing from the gaps.

Wu Qiren sighed. It had been five years but he still dreamt of his past life. His previous life was boring but it was definitely better than his current miserable situation.

"Thales! Thales!" A large hand stretched into the hole in the wall and grabbed Wu Qiren's ear before roughly pulling him out from that small and damaged place.

It was a dilapidated house. The bright stars in the night could be seen in the sky through the half-collapsed rooftop but the positions of the stars looked unfamiliar.

Wu Qiren could not hold out against that rough hand as he was only seven years old.

He was dragged on the rough brick floor. His knees hurt from the friction against the floor but he did not make a single noise. This was because the cruel Quide was especially intolerant with the wailing of children. It was said that he once broke the legs of a six-year-old girl who had cried for food.

"I've already asked Rick. The money you collected was five coppers less than last

week! You've stashed some away!" Quide was angry and looked as red as the mane of a lion. His protruding nose made him look even more ferocious.

Wu Qiren was flung to the ground. His gray eyes looked at the holes in the walls. The five beggars living with him in the same house, ranging between age four to ten, all shuddered at Quide's roar.

At the innermost hole was the smallest girl. The short-haired girl bit hard on her left hand, her face turning red. She looked at Wu Qiren who was on the floor in fear. At the hole beside her was Ned, a six-year-old boy who screamed with fright.

The girl was Coria. Wu Qiren understood the reason she was afraid.

In fact, Wu Qiren's luck that week was good. He, currently known as the beggar Thales, had obtained thirty-seven coppers this week. It was eighteen coppers more than the previous week.

However, he only surrendered fourteen coppers to Quide, the head of the beggar trade in a Black Street Brotherhood. The rest of the money, along with two years of coppers that he had saved, was delivered to Grove Pharmacy. With the help of the kind-hearted worker Yanni, he bought a course of medicine for typhoid fever.

Thales fed the medicine to the four-year-old Coria. Having typhoid fever at her age would be fatal without any medicine.

Over the last five years, Thales relived his past memories from the age of two to his current age of seven. From an ignorant child, he began recalling his past life bit by bit. The memories appeared fragmented and disordered. Even then, during these five years, he began to gain more and more awareness as compared to the initial fuzzy stage. He had a profound feeling when he saw others meet their end.

There were those who died from illness, those who fell to their deaths, those who drowned, those who were hanged, and those who were beaten to death (Thales even saw a crying beggar suffocated to death by a supernatural power from ten meters away once). The human trafficking business of the Black Street Brotherhood had no bottom line or principles. Even if they were gangsters, they needed time to hammer out rules and order. It had only been ten years since they started and expanded.

Additionally, the Blood Bottle Gang, also known as the 'nobles of the gangsters', in its ninety years history, had blood debts with its enemy.

Most of the time when witnessing these deaths, Thales felt helpless. Even he himself avoided a fatal end more than once by relying on scattered memories of his previous life.

Just like his current situation.

Quide was itching for a fight and was in high spirits. The look in his eyes was so characteristic of sadistic gangsters: vicious, cruel and sadistic.

"I did not stash any money! It is almost winter. Fewer people are passing by these three districts..." Thales got up from the ground as he quickly thought of and gave an excuse.

Slap

What greeted him was a ruthless slap in the face. Thales fell back to the ground.

"Hand over the money before I beat you up! Or I could beat you up first until you hand over the money! Take your pick!"

Obviously, Quide did not want to hear his excuse. The leader of the Brotherhood probably just wanted to extort for some beer money from them. Another possibility was that he simply wanted to beat somebody up.

"You can also be stubborn. I love stubborn children the most," Quide grinned hideously as he started rubbing his fists.

Looking at the large fists in front of him, Thales knew that Quide would not let him go even if he did not say anything.

Quide had tortured a beggar from the fifth room to death the previous month.

Thales held his red and swollen face as he quickly thought to himself.

Normally, Quide did not care about the accounts. When night fell, he would proceed to the subway's Sunset Pub to hang around or drink. He would not know how many Midier coppers was one Mindis silver, let alone how much the beggars under his care had turned in. This was all done by his deputy, the steady and dependable Rick. Even the shrewd Rick knew that the beggars earned about eight coppers per person every week.

Somebody had told on them.

That was the only possibility.

Thales looked around at the group of beggars. After getting his money from a rich female noble, he had returned directly to the Abandoned Houses². The beggars in the house must have seen this. In such a grim environment, a child's heart could become even more terrifying than what an adult could imagine.

Quide started to kick again. Thales secretly protected his abdomen with his elbow. He used some of his strength and pretended to be in unbearable pain from the kick. He could not make any sound as Quide loved the screams of children.

"I will speak!" Thales said with a fearful expression. "Don't hit me!"

"That depends on my mood!" Quide looked around and saw the other five beggars cowering in fear. This made him feel satisfied as his authority was respected.

"Wednesday morning, I met a noblewoman. She gave me ten coppers." Thales spoke as he trembled and hid in a corner.

"I knew it! Begging? It was stolen right? Nobody can hide the truth from me, especially a little thief like you!" Quide rubbed his palms viciously as he prepared for the next round of beatings. "Take out the money!"

Without even waiting for Quide to raise his eyebrows, Thales then added. "But I went to Red Street Market!"

"Red Street Market?" Quide lowered his raised hand a little. "You went to the Blood Bottle Gang's territory?"

"Yes. We cannot earn much money in our place anymore." Other than those in the Brotherhood, the brilliant and brave, and those with a specific purpose, there is none that would enter the three districts near the shady street without being cautious. Even the guards from the city defense team with swords and shields were unwilling to enter such a place full of crime."

"I got so much money the first day but the Blood Bottle Gang did not appear. I thought there would be an opportunity the next day."

"Idiot!" Quide fiercely kicked Thales. Thales saw Coria tremble at a distance. He then heard Quide shouted, "Think about it. How could the Blood Bottle's territory be such an easy pick?"

Thales recoiled back and really trembled. "Yes. The next afternoon, the Blood Bottle Gang caught me and hung me up. I said I was lost but they did not believe me. I gave them all my money and they still did not let me go."

"You good for nothing! How did you escape?" Quide spat ruthlessly.

"After that, I said I was Boss Quide's subordinate and they laughed loudly."

"What?" Quide clenched his fist and grabbed Thales' worn-out burlap collar. He raised Thales from the corner of a wall and asked, "What were they laughing at?"

Thales shook his head and replied, "I did not understand what they said."

Quide fiercely looked at him. "Speak quickly!"

Thales showed a terrified expression. He trembled and said, "Amongst them was a bald person. He said to 'spare the child since the child belongs to Quide and that Quide really needs children..."

Before Thales could finish, Quide had flung him against a wall.

He tried his best to protect his head and chest. He used the back of his body to endure the impact from the wall. He then immediately turned his back to Quide and withstood the blows of fury. After taking the blows for a moment, he tilted his back a little to cushion the intensity of the blows.

"Son of a... this bald... Sven... How did he know... I will kill you... Useless... Idiot!"

Mad with rage, Quide yelled repeatedly as he continued kicking Thales, but only a few words were discernible.

The children in the other holes in the wall were horrified to see Thales beaten up. However, they tightly covered their mouths and dared not say anything.

Thales kept enduring Quide's enraged kicks that vented his anger.

At the very least, now Quide would not ask where the extra money went. Besides that, although he was terrifying, an enraged Quide was much safer than a Quide who was gleefully torturing some kids.

Thales' words were half-truths. Thales did go to the Red Street Market but he hid at the dark corners of the alleys and watched his surroundings carefully. He did encounter a noblewoman who wore clothes of goose feathers. By her side were twenty Swordsmen of Eradication. This was when he came out to beg. It was the reason the Blood Bottle Gang did not interrupt him. Thales also obtained twelve coppers from the noble. (He was not stupid enough to steal it in front of twenty Swordsmen of Eradication.) Thales did not wait for the noble to leave, he disappeared into the crowd, never returning.

As for the bald Sven, Thales had never actually met him before. He only knew that the man was the head debt collector of the Blood Bottle Gang. Quide himself was once a thug for the Brotherhood. That was until Quide provoked the wrong person and had a lower part of his body broken. This information was a secret. Thales found out about this at the Brotherhood's large house when he overheard the Assassins, Layork and Felicia, secretly laugh at Quide.

Once Quide finished venting and cursing the bald Sven, he took out a bottle of wine and left grumbling. The back of Thales' clothes had been torn. His back looked bluish purple. Because Thales avoided getting hit directly and had turned sideways, some parts of his body bled from being scratched. The pain came, throbbing in waves.

Blood flowed to the ground. Thales could feel a burning pain. Perhaps because he had not been beaten in a very long time, his muscles felt as though they were burning.

Ever since transmigrating into this world; getting beaten up, becoming hungry, falling sick and feeling cold were all common experiences. However, ever since Thales gradually recovered his memories as Wu Qiren, by staying cautious and also relying on his previous experience, he had not been viciously beaten like this for a long time.

When Quide's voice faded away, the other five children crawled out from their holes. They proficiently carried the weak Thales to the yard. The ten-year-old 'Big Boy' Sinti scooped out water from a jar with a worn-out bowl. The crippled Ryan and the black-faced Kellet were both eight years old. They struggled to gather dead branches and weeds. They then start a fire with flints. The six-year-old yellow-haired Ned and the youngest Coria gathered a few strange leaves. They chewed the leaves and then

rubbed it on Thales' badly-bruised back.

Thales endured the pain as he tried to find a way to distract himself. He turned to see a crying Coria and a dejected Ned. He then tried to speak in a calm tone.

"It is alright. Ned, I do not blame you."

Ned suddenly raised his head and looked alarmed. The other four children gazed at him.

"How did you know?" Ned could not help but feel guilty and horrified.

When Thales was being beaten up by Quide, the three older children, though afraid, were gazing at the sight unwaveringly. The remaining two were Coria and Ned. One covered her face and did not dare to raise her head. The other looked at the wall and occasionally glanced in horror.

Coria's typhoid medicine was the sole purpose of those coppers. Coria would definitely not divulge that. Thales was not sure if it was Ned but now there was no doubt.

He tried to squeeze out a smile. "It is alright. Quide will not pursue this matter anymore."

"I... I..." Ned blushed in shame. He looked at Thales' back as his tears ran down. "I did not manage to obtain any money this week. I also did not dare to go and steal." He sobbed, "Rick did not say anything but Quide was very unhappy. He said if this continued, he would sell me to the desert where the Barren Bone people will eat me. I was so scared that I told him that you came back with a lot of coppers on one of the days... I thought that this way they would not... Quide then sent me back and said that he would come tonight."

Coria's face turned red too. The herbal medicine in her hands trembled and a few drops of blood dripped down to the floor from Thales' back. Thales moaned in silence. The diminishing burning sensation of pain was once again aggravated by Coria's actions.

Ryan glared angrily at Ned, causing Ned to lower his head even more. Kellet looked at Ned with a surprised expression and then looked at Thales. Only Sinti remained silent and continued to bring the water over.

This kid was only six.

Thales thought to himself.

This child was so innocent. Faced with Quide he was terrified and, in the commotion, he had uttered the wrong words.

"It is alright, Ned, Coria." Thales felt his injury getting better. He gently held Ned's hand. "But, you have seen it too, what Quide is capable of..."

Ned sobbed a little in terror.

Thales looked at him solemnly and said, "Next time, if you all cannot find enough money, just tell me. I will think of a way."

"When compared to Quide, only we are in the same group."

Ned cried uncontrollably. His words were interrupted by his sobbing. "Th-Thales. S-So-Sorry."

Thales silently watched Ned crying non-stop.

Finally, he turned his head around and inhaled lightly.

"It is alright now, Ned." Thales sighed and took the bowl of water from Sinti for a sip. "Don't worry. I will find a way."

Even then...

He looked at the other five children. Even the recovering Coria still looked terrified.

Tomorrow I must find a way to get more money. He thought to himself.

...

At the Sunset Temple of the Eternal Star City, after the prayers at sunset, a trainee priest who was cleaning the altar stopped her movements. She looked in surprise at the lamp containing Eternal Oil.

Ever since she started taking care of the altar she had never seen this lamp being used.

It was a lamp that had never gained attention. That lamp suddenly lit up with a bright yellow flame.

The flames suddenly turned vigorous and red like the color of blood.

An elder priest noticed the trainee's unusual demeanor. She shouted resentfully and chided the trainee before shifting her attention to the altar. But when she noticed the unusually lit lamp, she screamed.

"Niah! Quick! Inform the ritual master!"

The elder's surprise could not be concealed. She trembled and scurried over to that lamp, raised her right palm and then her left palm, as she prepared to pray.

What is going on? This was the first time the trainee Niah saw the respected priest lose her composure. It was to the extent that she herself was influenced.

Did I make a mistake? But I did not touch the lamp.

"But. But what do I tell the ritual master? Someone secretly came by and lit up the lamp by the altar?" Niah asked feeling flustered.

"No."

The elder kept staring at the lamp. Her praying hands continued changing their positions.

"This light, even if you search across the two continents of Errol and its countless islands, there is only one person who can light it up."

"That person would determine the future of this kingdom!"

Translator's Notes:

1. A theory of value usually associated with Marxian economics. Read more here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labor_theory_of_value

2. Abandoned Houses: The name of a group of abandoned houses in the Lower City District.

Chapter 2

Nervous Rick

"How did he end up like this from drinking?"

In the slums of the Lower City Second District, Quide's deputy, Nayer Rick, looked at the wine bottle in front of him with disgust. Quide was so drunk that he was like a heap of mud. Rick waved his hand and had two members of the Brotherhood carry the man down.

"Lock him in a room for a day. Release him when he is sober."

For him to drink to this state would mean that he could not do much to the child. Rick gave a mysterious smile.

Nayer Rick was a person who preferred others to address him by his surname. Quide fell in ranking from the thugs' chief to the beggars' chief after some setback. In comparison to the sluggish Quide, Rick was an ambitious and capable member of the Brotherhood.

He once studied at an accounting academy at Shocker City, south of the kingdom. If it was not because his scribe father had made a mistake, Rick could be working in the department of a city or even as a treasurer of certain households. He could also go even further and become a merchant of an industry. After some time, he would buy a title and join the upper ranks of the Constellation. Three hundred years ago, a clan with the sunflower symbol, Seucader, had risen just like this and was now a prominent noble clan in the kingdom.

But even though he fell from grace and joined a gang and thus was forever severed from the path of a noble, Rick also believed that his words would have more sway compared to his colleagues whose heads were only filled with muscle and women.

When the Brotherhood expanded to the southern coasts of the kingdom, Rick who happened to pass by was recruited. He utilized his talents and successfully sold a few slaves. The higher ranked members of the Brotherhood took notice of him and promoted him. They then dispatched him to Eternal Star City, the capital of the

kingdom, the heart of Constellation and the bright pearl of the western part of the continent. They allowed him to manage the Brotherhood and the accounts of the beggars.

Rick knew that although he had been sent as Quide's deputy and accountant, the beggar's business had already been entrusted to him by the Brotherhood. He looked at his 'boss' Quide who was once a well-known thug in the Third Street for being skilled at using swords and axes. Quide had now become trash that sought dignity from beggars. If Quide was not the son of a high-ranked member of the Brotherhood, he would have long been drowned and left to rot. On top of that, most of the beggar's losses were caused by Quide.

Naturally and fortunately, Quide's father had given Rick a lot of bribe money every month. This was how Rick could still profit.

With such a son, Quide's father would have immediately lost influence and power were he not an arms-dealing Powerhouse1.

What would the outcome of an underworld bigshot that lost his influence be?

Rick shook his head and watched Quide leave.

The beggar's business appeared petty and lowly, especially when compared to smuggling weapons and drugs, the trade of Eternal Oil and Crystal Drop Ores, as well as debt collection.

However, Rick believed that this was his opportunity.

The Brotherhood had grown quickly but human trafficking had always been its major source of profits. They dealt with everything including infants, elderly, humans, elves and even intelligent beings from the Magic Empress' territory. However, the most crucial thing was the origins of the Brotherhood's member. Among them, 'Widow Blackheart' Behrs was responsible for gathering and raising them. She would also sell some of them. The older ones would be sent to Rick to be tempered into beggars. When they grew up, the teenagers would be trained as thugs by 'Ironsheat' Locke and prostitutes by Felicia 'the Unfaithful'. They may also go to the other leaders and be disciplined into becoming members of the Brotherhood.

This was why Rick who ran the beggar business thought he was working at the foundation of the Brotherhood's business and the future of the Brotherhood's

transportation lifeline. It was also an information network in the capital. Thinking about it, he could identify all the promising and young future prospects for the Brotherhood. He can then obtain favors for the future.

This went to show that Nayer Rick was an ambitious person.

Besides that, Rick was very excited when he thought of something. This was Eternal Star City! It was the capital of Constellation, the second largest kingdom on the western part of the continent. It was also the birthplace of the Black Street Brotherhood. They can surely see that working here was like being a representative for the bigshots. This also meant that there would be opportunities for promotion.

Naturally, the chances for there to be a bad accident was also quite high.

'I am lucky.' Rick clasped his hands behind his back as he looked at the drunk Quide from afar with his eyebrows raised. 'I am lucky that this guy is a walking disaster.'

Under the moonlight, Rick turned and looked at the dozen or so abandoned houses. He knew that there were many beggars in each one. These seedlings were important chips for his future advancement.

One example was the black-haired Thales from the sixth house. Two years ago, the caretaker Behrs sent him here. She had displayed a different attitude towards that child.

The child who was eight years old at most was clever and crafty. He managed to act out a play and begged for money. A cute child who was beaten up by other children and had his money and food taken away. When he hid at a corner to weep alone, the ladies passing by could not help but give him compensation. Rick found that he was unlike other beggars who cried hoarsely to the extent that others felt depressed. 'We need more people who can use their brains in the Brotherhood.'

'When this child grows up, he would definitely climb higher. I should give him a reward and make him feel grateful. Naturally, without a contrast between the rewards, people will not feel grateful.'

This was also why when the boy from Thales' house claimed that Thales was secretly in possession of some money, Rick urged Quide to investigate the reason. When Thales was almost beaten to death by Quide, Rick would appear and stop him. He was even willing to antagonize Quide if necessary (that was all Quide was good for). Thales

would then treat Rick as a patron.

Rick did not care about whether all the money the beggars earned was handed over. This was what only short-sighted people would care about. Compared to a few coppers, Rick understood that human relationship was a more important property.

But this Thales was too clever. Rick knew that Quide would torture Thales to death regardless of whether he possessed the money (which would only be worse if he did have money). However, the boy found a way to escape disaster. According to common understanding, the spirited Quide would 'meticulously' punish the disobedient children to foster talent regardless of whether they were actually disobedient.

'It does not matter. What must be done had to be done. If the effect was not good and it failed, a reason could be found for Quide to beat him up.'

Rick went to the sixth house and walked across the ruined door. He then saw weeds at the yard and Thales gasping for breath as he lied down on the ground. Next to him were a few children smearing something onto him. My God! Children under the age of ten knew how to grow and use Urth Dragon Leaves? Only experienced gang members and the poor that lived for a very long time possessed the know-how to use this herb as a cheap cure for injuries.

"Ah! Mister Rick!" The crippled Ryan noticed Rick's arrival. His experience of having one leg broken had made him more sensitive to the surrounding environment.

It had been less than an hour after Quide was gone, the fear in the yard had yet to have subsided. The informant, Ned's face was covered in tears. Kellet was covering her black face. The eldest, Sinti, flinched.

The youngest, Coria, even screamed from fear.

Behrs had once said that this person had a noble inheritance and was most likely a beautiful woman in the future. She must not be ruined. Profits would come after she was trained by Felicia. It was a pity that the beggars must be handed over at the age of ten, or at latest at the age of twelve. It would be great if I could keep her until fifteen. Thirteen would be fine as well.

"Mister Rick!" Thales interrupted Rick's subtle thoughts. He turned his head with difficulty. The injury on his back caused him to grimace in pain.

"Ah. Thales. I am sorry," Rick sighed and showed a compassionate expression. "I could not stop Quide. I am only his deputy. I also cannot offend his backer."

"I could only come here quietly after that." While being cautiously watched by the other children, Rick squatted down and carefully examined Thales' injuries. "Fortunately, he was not so rough today. Otherwise..."

"Mister Rick. I am fine." Thales struggled genuinely. "I am sorry. The money I earned last week was actually..."

"Forget about the money!" Rick took the worn-out bowl from Sinti's hands. He threw away the water and placed a few Urth Dragon Leaves in it. He then picked up a stone and started to grind it. "You were sent here the moment you began to be aware of your surroundings. These few years, I watched all of you grow from a mere child trembling from the cold into a rough and thick-haired child. For me, all of you are more important than a few coppers," Rick said with a pained expression. "At this age, all of you are not even supposed to be begging but these are the rules of the Brotherhood."

"Mister Rick." Thales looked as though he felt touched by Rick's sentiments. He then tightened his fists. "I..."

"Come. Use the stones to grind the leaves. It is better than chewing it." Rick smeared the contents onto his hand and then smeared it on Thales' back. Next to him, Kellet bit her lip and whimpered.

"Thank you, Mister Rick," said Coria in a soft tone. "It would be great if you were in charge of us instead of Quide."

"Don't let Quide hear this." Rick laughed helplessly. "To be honest, I am very afraid of him."

The other children also laughed. Rick knew that people would accept another person easily when a common ground and a sense of humor was shown.

"Thank you very much, Mister Rick." Thales earnestly said. He knew that he was very mature in the eyes of many and did not need to show a child-like side.

Rick nodded. "Protect yourself well. You are a smart kid. I believe you can do it!"

"Oh right." Rick seemed to suddenly remember something. He returned the bowl to

Ned and took out a purse from his waist. He then handed it over to the bewildered Sinti. "I need to hand over money to the higher ups every month and do not have much. Here are thirty coppers. Go to Grove Pharmacy at the intersection between Twilight District and the Lower City District and buy some medicine. If the price of the medicine has not yet increased, the amount of money here should be enough."

Naturally, the money would not be enough. Rick thought to himself. He had been to the pharmacy a week ago and the price had just hiked. When the children discover that the money was not enough, they would think it was caused by a temporary price hike.

If they did not have enough money, they would need to beg for more. This way, they would not have enough for next week's quota. After that...

"Be careful when you leave to buy the medicine. Do not let others, especially Quide, find out." Rick said as he stood up.

Of course, Quide would find out. Rick thought.

If they do not buy the medicine, that would be even better. Quide would find out that they were hiding money.

The corners of Rick's mouth raised.

At that moment, I can obtain all of their loyalty.

"Mister Rick." Coria looked at the purse in Sinti's hand as tears were about to fall from her eyes. "You are really a good person."

Ned bit his lips and nodded.

Even the eldest, Sinti, was touched and weighed the purse in his hands.

Rick sighed and waved his hand. "No. I am the one that should apologize. I could only do this for you."

"Mister Rick," Thales was lying down on the ground and hesitantly looked at Rick. "I wonder..."

"Eh?" Rick raised his eyebrows. "What's wrong?"

"I heard that when we grow up, we would be sent elsewhere to be trained." Thales asked cautiously as though not wanting to offend Rick. "In that case, I wonder if we could work for you once our training is complete."

Hearing this, Kellet, Ned, and Coria looked at Rick expectantly.

Rick felt as though his heart grew.

Score. Faster than I expected.

"Haha. This?" Rick gave a smile. "Don't look at me like this now. I am an ideal man in the Brotherhood."

Rick smiled and bent down to touch Thales' hair, appearing more intimate. "The people under me are the best and the strongest in the Brotherhood!"

'This is just my truth.' Rick added in his heart.

"That is why, if you all want to work for me, you must work hard!"

"Mm!" The children nodded with hope. Thales was no exception.

"I am going now. Thales and the rest of you..." Rick turned his head around, showing the side of his face. "The next time this happens, secretly come over and inform me. Although I cannot stop him directly, I could look for some trouble and prevent him from approaching."

After Rick was finished, he showed his white teeth that gleamed under the moonlight and left without looking back.

"Mister Rick is such a good person." Ned's face was in a mess from the tears. "Not like that Quide."

"Mm." Coria nodded and seemed content as though she was eating sweets.

"But," The crippled and fearful Ryan hesitantly said, "I've always felt that Rick is more terrifying than Quide."

"So, you are a coward!"

"Ryan the coward. How are you going to earn money like this?"

Only Thales looked calm after Rick left.

When he saw Sinti counting the thirty coppers in the purse one by one, Thales breathed out a sigh.

He still felt pain on his back. He knew that medicine would be good for his injury. However, Thales had gone to Grove Pharmacy yesterday morning. When he took the typhoid medicine from Yanni, he had heard her complain about her stingy boss raising the price. The price of medicine for injuries had gone up to thirty-five coppers. It was five coppers more than the amount Rick had given them.

However, he also knew the daughter of the boss of the Sunset Pub. That was how he knew an important point. Rick was in charge of all of Quide's expenses at the pub.

But...

"I would also need to hand over the money to the higher ups every month and do not have much."

Rick's voice resounded in his ears and he could no longer bear to look at the purse filled with coppers.

The other beggars had already forgotten their fears and started being noisy.

Only Thales frowned. With difficulty, he turned to look at his own bruised back. He then sighed heavily.

This damn world.

...

Rick went to the tenth house. There was an eight-year-old named Kalak who was young but ruthless. Rick pressured Karak into joining him when he suddenly felt his neck turn cold.

This was his innate ability.

When he was absolutely calm (a little distraction would cause it to fail), his neck would

feel cold when there was a living thing five meters near him.

That was all.

However, he was not a warrior. Even if he was a warrior, his ability was useless compared to those in the military with psionic abilities, the powerful Swordsmen and Knights of Eradication, and even those mysterious Mystics. Even trainees in the temple could push him down.

However, Rick felt that one day, this skill would save his life.

Just like this very moment.

Rick quickly turned and looked around under the moonlight. At the same time, he put his left hand into his pocket and took out a compact but deadly crossbow.

The moonlight was bright. The streets were empty and there was nowhere to hide. Yet, there was nothing.

Rick took a deep breath and kept himself absolutely calm. He could feel the cool feeling behind his neck persist.

'Was it a rat in the sewers?'

Rick ran quickly to three different locations and the feeling remained. This made him reject his assumption.

What kind of rat would follow me for twenty meters after running towards three different directions?

Rick started to become more frightened.

Rick believed he should not have ventured out alone even though he was merely visiting the Abandoned Houses in the Brotherhood's territory.

He should have brought along twenty guards, with each of them wielding a Mystic Gun in each hand.

Just like the bigshot of the drug business Lazans Fischer, he always brought thirty people with him whenever he went out.

If I had enough money, I should have hired two Swordsmen of Eradication or a Psionic Warrior. Maybe even a Mystic. Forget it, Mystics were too scary.

Nayer Rick. You must be calm. He told himself. In the future, you would be in charge of Eternal Star City. Even the underground people of Constellation were calm. You must stay calm.

Rick turned around and calmly backtracked as though he was jogging.

'Did I offend someone? Does someone want my life? Was there something interesting in this neighborhood?'

He jogged away for hundreds of meters under the moonlight. There was nobody around him, yet his neck still felt cold.

Translator's Notes:

1 Powerhouse: One of the three divisions of the Black Street Brotherhood.

Chapter 3

Ghost

"Pardon my coming here presumptuously. But if the news from the Sunset Temple... If the information is reliable..." The right hand of the grey-haired middle-aged noble trembled slightly. He held his left chest and bowed deeply.

"Please allow me to personally settle this matter for you."

"You are quite well informed, old friend."

"It is not yet confirmed but that Lamp in the Sunset Temple has lit. Looks like it is quite close by."

Beside the blazing fire, a robust figure lowered his right hand near his chin and somberly said, "I have already dispatched Yodel. He is better than Aida at being inconspicuous"

"You know how important this information is. Even Liscia immediately sealed off the altar in the name of the oracle. That is why I cannot risk unnecessary exposure. I would only dispatch you in secret after there is absolute confirmation."

"Of course, of course." The gray-haired middle-aged noble concealed his excitement with difficulty. "If that time comes, I will wholeheartedly serve you."

The robust figure sighed. "I should be more excited than you when I heard this news.

"But I don't know why. I am feeling very calm."

...

Rick did not know how he ended up returning to the headquarters of the Brotherhood.

The cold feeling at his neck was still there.

When he saw the Black Street headquarters, the two elite guards were playing knife

games at the entrance. When he reached just outside the building, some shadowy figures were on guard, keeping watch. He entered the building and saw Powerhouse Morris behind the large iron table, examining the account books, and Felicia who had a disgusted expression (her proposal to raise the expenses of the brothel was rejected). He finally felt relieved. Even the Assassin Layork who had always been on bad terms with him seemed amiable sitting at the dining table in the candlelight.

Without noticing, the cold feeling at his neck disappeared as though it was never there.

Even Rick wondered if he had been too nervous.

He talked to Morris who was in charge of human trafficking that he suspected someone had been following him. Layork laughed and spat out a mouthful of wine. It extinguished the flames from the candle on the table. Felicia gave a huge yawn and tightened her large bosom. The look in her eyes became even more despicable.

Morris noticed Rick's cold sweat and weird look. He then patted Rick's shoulder. He told Rick not to overwork and watch less of Dark Night Temple's dramas. Rick was also told to wait for Doctor Ramon to give him some calming prescriptions when he returned from his call.

'Shit!'

Rick knew it was difficult for others to believe in his special ability, let alone an Assassin who had followed him from the Abandoned Houses to Black Street. This person had followed him for an entire kilometer and remained unseen as well as not taking any action. However, Rick subconsciously believed that this person was real.

After he returned to his room and lay down, he recalled the events in the tailing encounter that night. Even though he was usually very paranoid he could not help but think to himself: 'Was I really too nervous?'

Rick calmed down again and tried to use his ability again. Everything was fine. The back of his neck felt comfortable.

'Alright. I was probably paranoid.'

But suddenly, the hair-raising chill in the neck struck again!

'F*ck!'

'I can't sleep anymore!'

Rick suddenly jumped out of bed.

He pulled out a box from under the bed. Inside the box was a Siegel 6 Mystic Gun that needed to be carried with both hands. Feeling nervous, he stuck to the walls and carefully walked out to the hallway and listened carefully.

The hallway was full of lamps using Eternal Oil that would never extinguish. The hallway was very brightly lit but there was still nobody around. At a distance, a sentry on duty just came out of the toilet and was walking back. As though scratching at an itch, he pulled the crotch of his leather armor as he walked past Rick.

At the end of the hallways, Layork and Felicia shouted their licentious cries as usual.

"Damn. May this shameless couple break his penis after using too much force." Rick cursed loudly.

The Brotherhood member from earlier had the same feeling. He turned around and nodded to Rick. Their eyes locked as a sense of understanding appeared between the two.

Rick then saw the member scratch the crotch of his armor painfully. Meanwhile, the other party looked at him trying very hard to carry the Mystic Gun and leaning against the wall.

Both of them turned around awkwardly and went back to their original locations.

Rick rubbed the back of his neck.

'Shit. This ability must not be working properly.'

If a skilled elite of the enemy could sneak into the Brotherhood HQ undetected, holding the Mystic Gun would be pointless. Powerhouse Morris' ability would also be useless.

'Time to sleep!'

...

Thales' back injuries looked bad but it was not serious. This was because he was able to stand and walk again by the third day.

Yes, a famous person's attributes would be heavenly gifted. While lining up, Thales sighed as he looked at the Abandoned Houses with broken walls. He then received the rye bread and wild herbs from the thug Pierson and started to eat it.

He had unfortunately been born in such a place.

"By your side is a sharp branch. You must be the one who cut my hand!"

"It is not me! My hand was also hurt last night!"

"All of us had our hands hurt! It must be the people from the eighth house! They envy our gains from yesterday."

"So, it was them! We from the fourteenth house were also injured at night! They do not want us to go out and pickpocket!"

Thales yawned as he lazily listened to the beggars from the other houses. The argument developed into a fight. Beside these beggars was a crowd cheering. This happened until the thugs stopped them. Thales sighed as he swallowed the last mouthful of the awful food, then clapped his hands as he called out to the beggars from the sixth house.

"Time to work."

That day was Tuesday. The sixth house's begging went smoothly. For more business, they went near the sentry post, which was located at Western City Gate.

The recent week seemed to be the celebration of the Sunset God. However, there was a rumor that there was an oracle command to seal off the altar. This led to many believers entering the city from the west that week. They climbed the city walls and prayed to the setting sun as atonement for not being able to pray to the Sunset Goddess' local representative.

Before the guards' angry glares graduated to physical obstacles, Thales had successfully stolen a Luminous Moon deity statue made of black wood from a street vendor with the help of Coria and Ryan. The street vendor had paid too much attention to his wallet ("Go away bastards!"). So, when Ryan and Coria were busy haggling with

him for some stuff, Thales stretched out his hand and took the package behind him.

The market price of the Luminous Moon deity statue was at least fifty coppers. Naturally, the statue should not see the light of day and could only be sold through the Brotherhood channel. The veterans in the Brotherhood would know that they were just beggars and thieves. They would then push down the buying price, and if it were anything valuable they would even fight over it. Earning five coppers from it was already good.

However, the smallest mosquitos were still food even though tiny.

When Thales and the others returned to the Abandoned Houses, they saw Rick patrol the place. But he was not the usual calm and amiable self. Instead, he hurriedly admonished the guards with a few words and then disappeared.

"Is Mister Rick in trouble?" The hungry Coria bit her fingers, her stomach rumbling away. They had gone far and returned home late. Fortunately, Thales had quite a good relationship with the thug distributing the meals, Pierson. He often bribed him a little and then the other side would agree to keep some rice for them.

"It is probably Quide. That guy really knows how to create problems." Kellet replied. His stomach also cried out.

Hearing this name, Ryan and Ned trembled.

"Kids. There is no more food tonight." When the six entered, they could not see a soul in the dining yard. In the distance, Pierson who was in charge of getting food for them, waved his hand.

"Don't look at me. I also can't do anything about it." Pierson shook his head when faced with six angry children with no energy to ask questions and ignored them. "Rick had ordered us to rest earlier and moved our schedules ahead."

Thales frowned and touched his empty belly. He started thinking about whether to sneak into the thug's sentry posts and steal some food at night.

He then looked at the other five anxiously waiting for food and sighed. He took out the Luminous Moon statue from his pocket.

Finally, with Thales' persuasion, the Luminous Moon statue was used to trade with

Pierson for the food he had initially prepared for himself: two strips of dog meat, four halves of rye bread and half a bowl of black pine vegetable.

"Recently, Rick and Quide are rather edgy." While the other children ate, Pierson told Thales a piece of information before he left. "Quide's temper is getting worse by the day. He kept cursing some 'damn baldy' all day but he had always been like that. However, Rick has become weird especially in the last two days. According to those in the headquarters..."

At this moment, Pierson looked around and then whispered to Thales. "...he got tangled up with a ghost."

Thales watched Pierson leave as he bit into the unpalatable rye bread. However, when one is hungry, the rye bread would be particularly delicious.

Thales silently pondered. 'I wonder what happened to Rick to end up running into a ghost.'

'As for what made Quide in a bad mood...' Thales swallowed the bread. 'Looks like I need to keep a low profile for now.'

...

Rick became nervous again. Two days ago, he had thought that his special ability made a mistake.

That was until this morning when he opened up the register to prepare for the beggar's supplies. At that time, he had confirmed that his special ability did not make a mistake.

Rick was an ambitious person. He had believed that to achieve his ambition, he needed to start working on the small details, like the daily habits. One example was that he would never write his plans and travel itinerary on paper. Another example was that papers would be placed at inconspicuous places at all the drawers and containers keeping the important documents in case someone sneaked a look at them. He also did not keep all of his money in one place. He was proud of his own cautiousness and believed that he would be rewarded one day for it.

Like now.

When Rick opened the roster of beggars, there was a hair on each page in the same position.

This should have been a good thing. It would mean that nobody had flipped the pages. However, Rick was the son of a scribe.

His father had taught him that if a person wants it done, it was possible for a good thief or ranger to avoid the hair trick. They can open up the documents they want with the utmost secrecy.

And so, Rick learned a more cautious approach from his father.

The way to read the pages in secret would obviously be to put the hair strands back in their original position after flipping the pages.

The fastest way would be to hold the hair in place, turn the pages, then use the hand to hold the top and bottom layer of the page to keep the hair in place.

How would one counter this method?

For nobles, the fastest and safest would be to use a wax seal.

However, Rick's father had a special method. They used fry oil¹ to create a sticky gel. This oil was used by the poor living near the river bank. One characteristic and also the weakness of this gel was that it was not very sticky. As long as the book was not too heavy, even if the book is closed after being coated, the glued area would not stick. An external force was needed to hold both sides for some time before the page would stick.

When Rick opened the roster, he found the hair at the same place except for something different. The hair was stuck to the page.

Someone had been reading his list of beggars. That person held this hair as that person flipped the pages.

Rick felt his heart turn cold.

'On top of that, to have all four hairs at inconspicuous positions at their original positions without leaving any traces show that this person is a master.'

'Fortunately, this secret technique that was passed down by my father enabled me to notice this.'

'Four days ago, after watching Thales' begging act, I looked through the roster to find out which house he lived in. At that time, everything was normal.'

'From then until now. In these four days, somebody had come into my room and looked at the roster of beggars?'

Rick's scalp felt cold. He suddenly realized that this was not the most important thing.

He frantically opened the secret compartment of the drawers and checked the most important document, the trafficking books and the passbook of his secret deposits at Princely Bank.

His books and passbook were all safe. There were no signs of them being flipped and the hairs also fell naturally.

Rick felt relieved.

'Fortunately, the things in the secret compartment are still... wait. If it was a master. How did he miss the secret compartment?'

He took out the entire secret compartment and took it apart. He then placed his hand on the top of one part of the secret compartment to look for the hair that was stuck there.

After that, he collapsed back in his chair.

The hair was still stuck to a seam of the secret compartment.

When Rick was still scared out of his wits, he entered the dining hall. He turned a blind eye to the flirting Layork and Felicia. However, the always objectionable Layork loved gloating over other's misfortune. He shouted out to Rick.

"Accountant. I heard you met a ghost?"

Rick ignored him and sat down but continued to look expressionless. He pulled over a bottle of ink used for bookkeeping and treated it as sauce as he poured it over his beefsteak.

"Don't mind him." Felicia smiled as she sat in Layork's arms. She glanced amorously at the Assassin with her lips pursed and fed red wine to him. "Do you still want to come to my room tonight?"

"Of course. Of course," Layork hurriedly replied without waiting to swallow the wine, "I just learned today that the boss had removed the sentries outside the rooms a week ago. So, tonight we can... hahaha... we can be even wilder."

"Aiyo. You are really naughty."

Clang

Rick's ink bottle fell and spilled ink onto the table. The ink flowed to the front of the couple.

He had a pale expression as he raised his head to see the displeased Layork and Felicia.

"A week ago, there were no sentries at the houses at the headquarters?"

"Nonsense!" Layork wiped away the ink smeared on his body. In a bad mood, he threw a bread at Rick's face. "Recently, there is a lot of activity at the Blood Bottle Gang. The boss said he wants to keep this confidential and the fewer people around the better. That is why the sentry posts were moved outside the house. They are not even allowed to go into the house to use the toilet. However, you do not have to worry. Don't you have an inseparable ghost protecting you?"

"Then, in that hallway..." Rick did not realize that his voice started to tremble. "There should be no sentries at that passageway?"

Layork and Felicia had already started kissing each other as though there was nobody else around.

Rick took a deep breath.

'The day before yesterday, I was followed for some unknown reason at the Abandoned Houses. Then that night there was a non-existent sentry in the walkway. Lastly, someone looked at the beggar's roster in the room.'

'Wonderful. Everything is starting to connect.'

Nayer Rick then nervously told himself.

'You are being watched.'

'Your opponent could be very powerful. Powerful enough to move freely in the heavily guarded headquarters in Black Street. Not even a terrible Assassin like Layork or an experienced warrior like the boss, Morris, noticed'.

'I was lucky to receive my late father's blessings and noticed this.'

'He could be right behind me!'

'I must save myself!'

'I need to find his motive! '

Rick's mind ran wildly.

'In the past two days, that guy must have already turned my room upside down. However, he had only had a good look at the beggar's roster. My more important account book was discarded as though it was a worn-out shoe. '

'That guy is looking for something in the beggar's roster. That's right. When I was being followed, I was at the Abandoned Houses. Those were the beggar's residences!

'He is looking for a beggar!'

However, Rick had a headache thinking. He had more than a hundred beggars under him. The next month, Behrs would send another group of children of unknown origins. (The important and valuable children such as the descendants of some of the elites or children of the wealthy were either already ransomed or killed.) Which beggar was the guy looking for?

'With such terrifying skill and strength, why did he not just demand openly from the Brotherhood? We would just give him to you!'

'I would rather be in a harmonious relationship with him. I might as well drag out all the beggars and strip them naked to do a body search. Or maybe I would kill them all. This would be better than being scared out of his wits having a 'ghost' hanging around.'

'Wait. I just noticed something.'

'Why did he not make a request to the Brotherhood?'

'Naturally, this is because it is something nobody should know, even if it was the Black Street Brotherhood.'

'Are they the Brotherhood's competitors? That is wrong. If the Blood Bottle Gang had such strength, the Black Street Brotherhood would have already been destroyed dozens of times.'

'That means he does not have any formal channel and also felt that dealing with the Brotherhood of the Lower City District was not worth the time.'

'Naturally, such terrifying people would not have any dealing with gangs from the slums.'

'Why is he interested in these long-lost orphans?'

'If he is looking for missing children then why doesn't he just go directly to the police? Such people would be very influential. The authorities wouldn't dare to ignore him. Even the Brotherhood could only comply.'

'Wait!' Rick then seemingly noticed an important point.

'Powerful, sneaky, secretive, interested in the origins of a child and does not want to deal with the Brotherhood.'

'Strength requires money and resources. He is secretive because it would be bad for him if this is made public. He does not deal with the Brotherhood because he is too highly ranked. As for being interested in the children that the Brotherhood had gathered from different sources and channels... '

'Wait.'

'Since his strength is probably above supreme-class, he must be backed by power, wealth and position. Yet he avoided the Brotherhood and the police to secretly search for a certain important child... a child?'

Rick fiercely slapped his thigh as he had an idea.

'This guy is involved in the blood inheritance struggle of a big family!'

'F*ck!'

Rick glared hard opposite him, at Layork and Felicia who were starting to neck.

However, his thoughts had long separated from this couple.

Perhaps in the entire Constellation, none of the fifteen million people would know of this day. A secret truth that would shake the kingdom and the continent was almost discovered by an insignificant gang leader.

Editor's Note:

Fry is the term for fish in the infant stage. You could think of them as baby fishes. Please don't confuse it with cooking oil used for frying.

Chapter 4

Disaster Strikes Unexpectedly

"Jala! Bring another dozen glasses of black pine wine!"

Inside the noisy and dim Sunset Pub, Quide was breathing heavily as he leaned down on the bar counter. He raised a glass of wine to his mouth, drinking glass after glass.

"Hey, big guy. If you don't tip there would be no black pine wine!"

Jala stood behind the bar counter and was in a bad mood as she brought two glasses of black pine wine. She slammed them on the bar counter without a trace of politeness. "I am giving you the last two glasses out of respect for your father! I will give you thirty seconds to finish drinking it. After that, quickly get lost! Every time you sit here for more than an hour, the profits of my bar, no, the entire Underground Street would drop by ten percent!"

Quide was already in a daze. Even in the din of the bar, Jala's voice still sounded distant. The feeling of being stared at and the possible mockery in their hearts set Quide's heart aflame.

'In those years, I was a terrifying presence in the Lower District, the "Blood Axe" Quide. If it was not because of that incident... Now, why is it that a bar girl even dares to bully me? Even the bald-headed Sven who debuted two years later than I dared to ridicule me in front of the beggar children. They laughed at my lower body that... '

'F*ck!'

"Watch where you are going, girl!" Quide gnashed his teeth. He shook his heavy head as he stood and grabbed Jala's hand. He pulled her across the bar counter and fiercely roared, "I said, another dozen glasses of black pine wine!"

The whole pub turned quiet.

The Lower District was well known for its chaos in Eternal Star City. Moreover, the Underground Street was famous for its chaos in the Lower District. This was especially

so after the Black Street Brotherhood took over ten years ago. This chaotic place revolved around the Sunset Pub. In the Sunset Pub, if a person was not a member of the Brotherhood, he would be here looking for the Brotherhood members.

This was why when Quide grabbed Jala's hand, all the other people in the pub just watched the scene. They did not say anything nor did they try and stop it.

Quide felt more and more dizzy. However, he still felt that the wrist he seized felt slippery and soft. He could smell the fragrance of Jala's body. In the dim light from the candles, the nearby Jala's brown hair appeared tidy and clean. Her smooth face and delicate figure appeared clearer than usual, causing Quide's imagination to run wild.

Jala was frightened. She was shocked by this once powerful thug who was now a drunkard.

The noise from the guests had vanished making the drunk Quide feeling pleased. He felt that his actions had received the proper attention.

But soon, when he looked at Jala's body, he started to get sober. His recklessness to be pleased gradually turned into fear.

Jala Charleton. Quide was one of the few who knew her full name.

'This pretty woman... ' Quide suddenly remembered that his father warned him to 'stay away from her' many times.

The captivating and daring 'bar girl' was gazing fixedly at him. Quide's lower jaw began to tremble.

"Jala... I did not..."

Before Quide could react, the hand that seized Jala's wrist was, in turn, pulled and locked at the back. The next second, Quide's middle finger and forefinger were bent towards the wrong direction. What followed was a heart wrenching severe pain.

"Argh!"

Quide shouted in pain. Even his face twisted in a grimace.

However, it was not over. She had ruthlessly hooked his hand and then forcefully

pulled his elbow joint the other way.

Crack

"Argh! No! Jala! Big Sister Jala! I was wrong... I should not have... argh!"

Quide's scream coincided with the sound of his elbow being dislocated.

Before Quide's cry for mercy had ended, the nimble woman had already taken advantage of the momentum to flip over. In her extremely short pants, she had already lifted her slender left leg over the bar counter and smashed it onto Quide's neck.

"Good job Little Jala! You did not make the boss lose face!"

"With this skill, you can apply for the Eradicator swordsmanship training!"

"She is actually wearing safety pants!"

"I swear I saw it! I dare to bet ten coppers that she is wearing black!"

The surrounding guests resumed the partying spirit. All of them cheered for Jala.

"Listen here you big-headed gorilla!"

Jala ruthlessly glared at Quide who was gasping for breath. She stood with one foot behind the counter and her left feet on the countertop while her right arm locked Quide's extended arm. Jala's figure was graceful and slender.

She slowly pulled out a weird knife from the holster on her left leg. The blade and the handle of the knife were not in a straight line. From a distance, it looked like the leg of a wolf.

After that, Jala stabbed the palm of Quide's hand without batting an eyelid. The Wolf Limb Blade nailed him to the bar.

The cheers of the other guests became even louder.

"Wu wu!" Quide's tears streamed down from the pain. However, with his neck being squeezed, his cries sounded like a pig's.

Jala slowly lowered her upper body. Her gentle beauty was evident. She approached Quide's teary face before whistling and laughing.

With a look that was as fierce as a ruthless demon, but an amorous and rhythmic (causing others to feel disappointed) voice, she spoke.

"Quide Roda..."

"I don't care whose son you are. I don't care that you are the head of the beggars. I don't care that you are a thug collecting debts. However, you better f*cking listen up! From now onwards, if you dare to appear in my pub, I will mince your genitalia into minced meat, blend it into wine, and make you drink it! Do you understand me?"

Quide cried as he held his pierced right hand and ran out of the pub. Meanwhile, the other guests laughed loudly while Jala continued to project a despicable look. Jala clapped her hands before she wiped the Wolf Limb Blade clean with a look of disgust as though it was not blood but the mucus of a devil.

Jala turned around unhappily and looked at the other guests who were still looking. Most of them had lascivious looks and ulterior motives.

"What are you looking at? Whoever dares to keep looking will be charged double!"

Her rude words caused the others' attention to go back to their wine. Jala then ruthlessly threw away the rag and returned to the kitchen.

"Is that enough? I did as you said and even said the word 'genitalia'."

Jala grabbed a bottle of white wine. A multipurpose pocket knife appeared in her hand which she used to neatly open the cork.

"Of course, Miss Jala." In the kitchen, Quide's deputy and the actual manager of the beggar's business, Nayer Rick, gently lifted his black hat and nodded with a smile. "I hope he would restrain himself in future by not drinking too much and continue to wantonly tyrannize the beggars. The Brotherhood cannot always clean up his mess."

"I am sure you mean that you cannot always clean up his mess." Jala quickly drank a mouthful of wine. Rick suddenly felt that Jala's rough actions appeared appropriate, fresh and attractive.

"That is also correct. This is because the Brotherhood's gains are my gains." Rick laughed and subconsciously touched his neck.

"Do you think this would be effective? I feel like such a person would end up causing more problems such as venting on your beggars."

"You know him well," Rick thought to himself.

"Actually, I myself am not too sure if it would be useful. This is because I do not know him that well. However..." Rick shook his head helplessly. This was his signature expression of innocence. "He was aggravated three days ago for a laughable reason. He beat up one of the young ones with good prospects. If the child was not clever, another good prospect would have been killed by Quide."

"I never knew you were so kind and righteous," Jala sarcastically said in her heart.

At this point, Rick's eyes became firm.

"That is why I decided that this cannot continue. He has to be admonished otherwise sooner or later he would destroy the business containing all my hardships."

"Alright. You do not have to explain to me the reasons you want to kill your boss."

"I never said I wanted to kill him."

"Returning to the main topic, give me my agreed remuneration. I only take cash," Jala interrupted Rick. She lazily drank the white wine. She then stretched out her tongue and tried to lick the last drop of wine from the bottle. It was an action that stirred Rick's mind.

"Also, you must pay the money he owed today."

"Especially..." Jala narrowed her eyes at Rick who had taken off his hat and saluted and left.

'Don't think I do not know that you substituted Quide's wine.'

'Others may not notice but I, Jala, from the Sunset Pub can tell that Quide drank the powerful and highly concentrated Chaca wine.'

'Unlike the other wine, Chaca is often given to the death convicts in handcuffs in the western battlefield for that last charge. Drunk people have no trouble moving but they are just not as aware.'

'That is why Rick, did you think you have too much money or did you really want him dead?'

...

Quide was still tipsy and in utter humiliation and pain when he returned to the entrance of the Abandoned Houses. He did not stay at the Blackstreet Headquarters where Quide felt that everybody who knew the news would be looking at his lower body. Sure enough, two thugs happened to pass by behind the walls. The contents of their chat drifted from afar.

"Have you heard? The beggars were passing rumors that Quide is no longer a man."

"What does that mean? How could he become a woman?"

"Idiot. It means that Quide got castrated! I heard that a few years ago, he collected debts at a haunted house at Carima Street. It was where Earl Norfolk and his family were hanged. Apparently, he encountered a red-clothed female ghost that cut off his lower body part... a clean cut."

Suddenly, Quide felt as though all the blood in his body rose to his head.

The next moment, he lost control of himself and roared as he rushed out from behind the wall. He then strangled the throat of one of the thugs tightly.

"Who?! Who said that? Which bastard!"

"Which bastard?"

"I am going to kill him!"

The other thug stumbled back from fright.

Quide overpowered the thug on the ground. His grip gradually tightened. However, his impaled palm was unable to apply much strength.

Back in the day, Quide was a well-known head of the thugs in the Brotherhood and also a leader. He was dispirited in the past few years and this caused his stamina and skill to drop. As long as it was not the woman from the Charleton Family, he would still be able to overcome the other common thugs, especially in this given scenario. At that moment, Quide's anger had become a source of endless strength.

"Boss Quide. These are only rumors. We do not believe... Argh!"

Quide suddenly raised his head like a beast.

The thug offering an excuse stepped back in extreme fear.

He could immediately see that his companion had turned pale. The companion's breath became weaker and weaker.

The thug that kept retreating saw the ominous glint from Quide's face and became frightened. "Ah, that's right. These rumors all came from the beggars. Boss, it is not our fault! Go and ask the beggars!"

Crack

It was the sound of a neck being broken. The thug that was being strangled by Quide was now lifeless.

Quide slowly got up from the ground with an ominous glint in his eyes. The strong aftereffects of the wine he drank had caused him to gradually lose his reasoning.

The remaining thug trembled as he looked at the terrible situation. He cried out in distress as he frantically tried to escape.

Quide wanted to chase but he was so drunk and unsteady that he was unable to run.

Quide ruthlessly gasped for breath as he looked at the corpse by his feet. He was still not satisfied so he kicked the corpse a few times. Then he shook his head and walked towards the dozen abandoned houses.

Quide never wondered why the thugs on patrol never showed up as it was necessary to keep a tight watch over the beggars. His only drive was to find the ones that ridiculed him and then torture them to death one by one.

As he had just killed someone, Quide felt as though a shackle in his mind had been released after a long time. He had returned to the days in the past where he made a living with the knife.

"These damned thieves," He fiercely thought to himself. "Since you dare to start such rumors, you better be ready to pay the price."

"Damned thieves."

The fleeing thug scaled the large gate of the Abandoned Houses. He coincidentally met Rick at the tree outside the gate.

"Mister Rick!" The thug looked at Rick as though he had found his savior. "Boss Quide... Boss Quide has gone mad! Didn't you say that we would be able escape in time? In the end, before we could finish speaking, Quide..." The thug was so terrified that he was breathless and his words were not clear.

"Pierson could not escape? He was killed?" Rick was taken aback.

After the thug sobbed and confirmed it, Rick shook his head sadly. "This is my fault. I had thought that after hearing this news, Quide would have... No other choice. Go and close the large gate. Lock Quide inside the Abandoned Houses District. After that, prepare the carriage. We are leaving immediately."

"Alright, Mister Rick. Where are we going?" The badly shaken thug quickly nodded repeatedly when he heard that they would leave. He did not stop to think about what would happen to the beggars who would also be locked in.

"Go to our headquarters. Look for Boss Morris."

Rick watched the thug run to the stone gates. He closed the gates and then locked it. After that, Rick's expression looked solemn.

"This time, Quide would look for all the beggars. Amongst them is definitely the one that the 'ghost' is looking for. I had moved the schedule ahead today. It is not dark yet. Quide would have most of the night to deal with the beggars.

"Whether they would be killed or tyrannized, these would be the problems of the ghost or assassin. Since he is interested in the beggars, what would he do when the beggars suffer a catastrophe?

"First of all, he would have no time to look for me. If he is here to look for the beggars, Quide would be killed by him. The Brotherhood would then take over this place tomorrow and I would not have any more problems.

"If he is here to kill a certain beggar, he may see Quide (this is very likely and nobles should never be underestimated) and allow him to continue killing the beggar. Once the objective is achieved, the problem would also be solved.'

"In other words, the family problem of this big shot and my cold neck would be solved tonight.

"If it doesn't, the ghost that is unable to find its objective would look for me." muttered Rick. Rick did not think that the lackeys of a big family would have a good temper. He also did not believe that he would live to see the next day after meeting them.

Rick had also thought of feigning illness for a month or even transferring to some other place. He had wanted to run as far as possible, away from this place, until the ghost found what it wanted.

However, if he were to suddenly fall sick, it may reveal to the ghost that he knew of the ghost's existence. That would be using his life as stakes to gamble on the ghost's compassion.

Rick believed that there would be a safer method, a scapegoat to reduce suspicion, to expose the ghost and end his bad luck.

"Boss Quide. This time I will have to trouble you!" Rick thought.

"It is unfortunate for the beggars such as Thales and Karak. It's certainly possible that certain troubles might have occurred because of my inadequate supervision. But when compared to my life and future..."

At this moment, the lucky thug who escaped returned quickly from a distance with a carriage.

Rick nodded to him and gave him a comforting and encouraging smile. He then went to the carriage and pulled out a mini crossbow that had its arrows soaked in Blue Vine Grass. He proceeded to shoot it into the wide-open mouth of the surprised thug.

...

What Rick did would never be known to the world. However, his actions would influence the fate of the kingdom.

Because their rest period had been shifted earlier, the beggars of the sixth house led by Thales sat next to the fire they had lighted with difficulty as they counted that day's earnings.

"The black-clothed woman gave us eight coppers. I heard that her youngest son had just died from typhoid. No wonder she was so generous."

"Droopy-ears Miralla gave us all her remaining coppers after grocery shopping... Oh, there were only two."

Sinti smiled and counted the coppers one-by-one, placing them in his left hand. Thales nodded and grabbed a sharp rock. He then wrote two '正' characters on the ground¹.

"That thin man wearing high boots would not give us any money. So, Ryan and I taught him a lesson."

Kellet took out a card, looked at it worriedly and said, "However, he only had this card in his hand. I do not know what this is for."

"This is the pass for the state-run research association, Jade Star Grand Library. That is in the Upper District five blocks away from us," Thales said after he scrutinized the card, "That thin man must be a foreign scholar. He is probably a philosopher or a scientist. However, with his unconventional appearance, he is most likely a literature and art scholar."

"Wow, Thales! You can read those words!" Both Coria and Ned looked at Thales in admiration.

"How is that possible?" Thales shrugged as he noticed the admiration of the two children. "Nobody taught us how to read or count. I simply looked at the back of the card and saw that book emblem."

However, Thales had already taught himself how to read a little. Some of the words he learned were "Sunset Pub", "Grove Pharmacy", and "National Research Institute". These words on the signboards and his previous memories made him value knowledge. He would not pass up any opportunity to gather knowledge.

The freedom to sit at desks and learn from their predecessors was really a blessing. Thales lifted his dust-covered palms that had worked the whole day which were covered prematurely with calluses, then rubbed his stomach that was eternally hungry and sighed.

Thales could not remember his transmigration circumstances. To be precise, he only regained the memories of his past life after the gradual maturity of the young Thales' cerebrum.

His memory of when he was two to three years old was unclear, just like a regular two-year-old. He only remembered sticky red blood (he did not know why color could be described with the word sticky), a black stone room full of crying infants, a skinny woman who he would later on recognize as the 'Black-Hearted Widow' Behrs, the female leader responsible for raising the new children of the Brotherhood.

Thales was sent to the Abandoned Houses at the age of three. It was also about that time when memories of his past life began to surface. Most of the scenes he recalled were of himself sitting in front of a desk looking back and forth between a book and a computer or sitting in a classroom conversing with a dozen or so young people that were dressed differently or together with a middle-aged professor discussing something.

However, that was now an illusion.

In the past four years, Thales managed to maintain the living conditions of the beggars in the sixth house. This was in an environment of crime and death where beggars were beaten up and bullied in the Lower District.

Compared to his past life as a post-graduate student where he was more brain than brawn, Thales had acquired many new skills in his four years of his begging career. For example, putting on an act to win sympathy, pickpocketing, eavesdropping silently and collaborating with someone else to shift the blame.

In the meantime, Thales had made many preparations that exceeded the capabilities of a beggar. For example, creating good relationships with people from the different social strata (in the Lower District presumably they were from the lower strata), secretly exploring the secrets of the Brotherhood, arranging secret locations and stashing some stuff from the bosses. Quide was not wrong at all.

That was right. Thales was not ready to accept the destiny given to him by the world. He will not become a contented beggar nor did he want to become a thug of the Brotherhood, a thief, or involved in any kind of gang-related roles in Eternal Star City.

He wanted to run away, find his own life and become a free man.

At the very least, more freedom than his current life.

"I just need to proceed step-by-step with a good plan..."

Thales looked to a corner of the house where there was an inconspicuous slab stone.

'Then I can... I can... '

At this moment, screams of fear and panic came from the seventeenth house. "No! Kara!"

Soon, Thales would learn the most important lesson after he transmigrated.

Disaster strikes unexpectedly.

Translator's Notes:

1. The Chinese character '正' has 5 strokes. It is usually written stroke-by-stroke in tandem with each tallying count. Hence, a complete character would be a group of five counts. Two complete characters would be a total of ten counts.

Chapter 5

Mad Guide

The Abandoned Houses were not houses but the name of a location in Eternal Star City. It was located in the Lower City Second District, adjacent to the infamous Black Street. The entire area was also about the size of one street.

Thales once heard the elders of the Brotherhood mention that these Abandoned Houses were once the King of Constellation's courtyard. A hundred years ago, the buildings had a better name, but nobody remembered it. Only the city hall had records of it. It was once bustling and filled with ordinary city folk of the kingdom's capital.

At some point in time, it had turned into the meeting grounds of gangs and, occasionally, the battlegrounds of different factions.

As a result, the lively neighborhood was gradually stained with blood and steel. The place became abandoned with only tattered brick buildings remaining.

The Abandoned Houses were also treated as dead-lands for discarding dead bodies and so, to this day, children that grew up happily in the capital would be admonished with "If you are disobedient, I will send you to the Abandoned Houses." From then on, the notoriety of the Abandoned Houses was second only to the terrifying Black Street.

When the Black Street Brotherhood rose and seized control of supremacy in the underground world at the Lower City District, they turned the Abandoned Houses into the headquarters of the beggars' business.

In order to manage the beggars and prevent them from running away at night, they arranged thugs to watch every house. The Brotherhood dug trenches—ten feet wide and fifteen feet in depth—around the houses. They then filled the trenches with wood and rusted nails. The only entrance would be the front gate which could be locked up.

There were rumors that many people died trying to get out, but one person eventually managed to find a way to escape. However, in the four years Thales had been at the Abandoned Houses, nobody managed to find this legendary secret tunnel. Instead, the bodies in the trenches increased every year as the Brotherhood's business expanded.

It was said that every year, there were children who did not know better and attempted to escape. This was also why the Brotherhood cleaned up the trenches of corpses once a year.

As its name suggests, the brick houses there were abandoned and there were a total of twenty-three houses. There would have been more but some had collapsed from the gang wars many years ago. There were also some that were demolished to dig trenches.

These houses were irregularly placed behind the gates. Some were close to each other while others were 'isolated'.

Beggars with good luck would be assigned to houses with wells. The unlucky ones, like Thales from the sixth house, would have to draw water from other houses to fill up their water jars—it was something priceless.

Water and food often caused the beggars to fight. One example was the water jar from the sixth house. In his second year there, Thales had used various methods to reach an agreement with the seventeenth house next door to obtain water once a week.

Before that, Ned and Coria have not arrived yet and there was only Sinti, Ryan, Kellet, and two other beggars who were already dead. At that time, even drinking water was a problem.

Right now, Thales heard the 'leader' of the seventeenth house, Diego's voice. Thales could still remember Diego's voice from the time that they had fought for water when he used a stone to smash Diego's head—it sounded very much like this one.

"Kara! Someone! We did not! It wasn't us!" Diego's voice sounded agonized and panicky.

As a result, all the beggars in the sixth house, including Thales, were unable to react for a moment. But Thales had memories that did not belong to this world, his first reaction was to take the others into the yard to hide in the hole behind the house.

After some time, Thales felt that it was too late to regret his decision. He glanced at the stone hidden under the wall of the seventeenth house. He stared at the dog tunnel that connected the seventeenth with the sixth house. This was the symbol of alliance between the children during those days.

"What happened to Diego? Did he get into a fight?" Ned asked curiously after hiding himself.

The child beggars did not exactly get along. Among the poor houses, the sixth house was an exception to this rule.

Many of the children's injuries can lead to death, aside from Quide, their injuries were usually caused by other child beggars—children below the age of ten do not know their own strength. One of Thales' housemates had also died like this before Ned and Coria arrived.

However, the seventeenth house was also one of the minorities. Diego was a brown-skinned, narrow-eyed blond. He was a carefree and stubborn child. At nine-and-a-half years old, he had more leadership qualities compared to Sinti and Thales. At the very least, the beggars of the seventeenth house listened to him. This also made the battle for water between the seventeenth and sixth houses full of twists.

"It doesn't seem like a fight. Are the other houses bullying Diego? It's surely the tenth house's Karak! He loves bullying others!" Kellet seemed to have thought of something and spoke hurriedly.

"Then we must hurry and go help! We told them we would help each other." Ryan was about to climb out of the hole and climb into the dog tunnel when he was pulled back by Thales.

"Don't be impatient. It's not Karak! It's something else!" Thales listened solemnly to the horrible screams next door.

"No! Diego!"

After that, there was a blunt sound as though a sandbag was thrown to the wall. However, the voice this time came from a child named Ursula. Thales remembered this eight-year-old child. That time when the fight for water was over, Ursula had pouted tightly as she unwaveringly stood by Diego's side.

During the fight, it was she who held on to Sinti's thigh and prevented him from intruding onto Diego's and Thales' fight. Had Thales not violently attacked Diego's knee and quickly picked up a stone, they might not have had water to drink today.

"Something is wrong!"

As the oldest child in the house, Sinti's expression began to turn somber. This sixth house member was the happiest and most willing to work together with Thales. Sinti rarely spoke, but when he does, it is either an important matter or a critical point.

Soon, the children's uncertainty turned into panic.

"Beg for mercy! Beg for mercy! Go on! I love to hear you kids beg!"

A vigorous and frenzied voice came from next door.

Every beggar in the Abandoned Houses would never forget this voice, it was more terrifying than the devils of hell. At the very least, a devil would not break a child beggar's bones inch by inch, or slash open their faces one slice after another. A devil would also not submerge a child beggar's face underwater and say that he was 'quenching your thirst' at the same time (At least, the child beggars did not know whether a devil would actually do it).

It was Quide.

Quide Roda, the leader of the beggars in the Black Street Brotherhood was both their nightmare and doomsday star.

"No! Boss Quide! We are wrong! We... Argh!"

"Let us see if you still dare to speak nonsense! Let us see if you still dare to curse me behind my back! Damn red-haired woman! Damn baldy! Damn Jala Charleton! All of you should die!"

While Quide cursed deliriously, the sounds of beatings and the sounds of fists, rocks, or bodies colliding against the wall was heard.

"Help! Help! Diego! Kara! Marita! Hurry and get up! Hurry and come save me!"

"Run! Run quickly— Argh—!"

"Oh my God! Where are the guards! Where is Mister Rick! Gods! He wants to kill us all!"

"No! Don't!"

Under the moonlight at the Abandoned Houses, heart-wrenching cries came from many mouths. Thales was shaken to the core!

Thales took three seconds to react. What was Quide doing?

He turned around and looked at the others in the sixth house. Ned and Coria were trembling by the hole. Ryan, who had wanted to rush out, was already petrified.

Kellet and Sinti were not much better. The former's expression of impatience and fear rolled back and forth as he watched them—he wanted to speak but could not—the latter turned pale and stared back at Thales.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

"All of you damn trash! Even you guys dare to ridicule me! You dare to ridicule 'Blood Axe' Quide Roda! Even you guys dare... Haha, scream! Why are you guys not screaming? Scream!"

The frenzied roars were accompanied by agonizing screams. Everyone did not want to think too deeply about the broken voices.

Thales knew that at this moment, panic has spread in the sixth house. He quickly thought of the current situation.

Quide is beating up the beggars in the seventeenth house. No, just by listening to him, and the intensity of his beatings, tonight's attack is not something as simple as venting. Besides that, Quide may be an asshole, but he wouldn't attack everyone in the house at the same time...

What about Rick? What about the guards and patrolling thugs? They may not be able to hear from across the stone walls, but the thugs patrolling on the roads should be able to hear it!

Naturally, Thales did not know that the forces guarding the place had been reduced to two for the night. On top of that, these two thugs would never return.

"Thales. What do we do?" Kellet instinctively felt that something was wrong from listening to the tragic events next door. He was pale and sweating as he continued to ask Thales.

"Quiet. Everyone is not allowed to go out! We..." Thales frowned and struggled to think of a countermeasure. Before he could finish, a child beggar's figure appeared at the dog tunnel connecting the seventeenth and the sixth houses.

Coria cried out quietly in fear.

Thales recognized who it was from a quick glance. Coming from the seventeenth house was Ursula whose head was bleeding and about to collapse. Before Thales could help her up, Ursula fell down, gasping for breath and totally oblivious of her blood-drenched face and hair.

"Run! Run quickly! We must quickly..."

Thales and Sinti nervously helped her up. The tragic screams still continued but Ursula seemed to have lost her sanity. She could no longer answer questions except to simply murmur "run quickly" over and over again.

Until Thales slapped her in the face.

"What is going on? Did Quide come out?"

Ursula's tears kept streaming down.

"Qu... Quide has gone mad! He wants... not just us! He intends to look for us in each house one-by-one!"

Ursula was already incoherent with her words but it was enough for the children of the sixth house to understand what was going on. All of them turned pale. Even Thales could not help but feel fear in his heart.

"When he sees someone, he hits and beats them until they stop breathing... I heard crying and went to the third house to take a look. I saw him drag Larry out. There was so much blood when he walked out. He then saw me..."

"He caught Kara. Kara was smashed into the ground. Diego wanted to stop him but took a few hundred hits, Diego became motionless... Then there was Marita. Quide threw her into the bonfire... sniffs... bonfire..."

Thales could feel his scalp go numb.

Thales had seen Quide beat people up before, but he would usually be stopped by the other thugs when the child was on the verge of death. The Brotherhood did not care if the abused child received permanent injuries.

"The third house is finished. Our house is, too... He was beating up Midelan just now. I don't know how many houses are left..."

The weeping and lamenting Ursula had not yet finished speaking but Thales suddenly covered her mouth. At this moment, through Thales' actions, everyone realized that the crying and the roaring from next door had stopped. The seventeenth house was quiet as though the children were asleep.

Only ragged panting could be heard. Nobody knew what it meant.

In the sixth house, all the children began to tremble. In that instant, Thales quickly turned and lowered his voice as much as he could. "Listen. We must quickly..."

Bang!

A loud noise was suddenly heard. The doors to the sixth house were opened.

From the entrance, Quide's shaky figure slowly approached. He looked at the seven trembling children with a fierce and hideous grin.

"Where... where can you run? Eh? You... you look familiar..."

Everyone in the sixth house, including Thales, were stunned.

Quide rubbed his nose. Thales saw a bright red color on his face—the color of a drunk person. Quide's hands were dark red—the color of blood.

Quide looked at Thales who was covering Ursula's mouth.

"I- I remember you!" His expressions shifted constantly between a sinister leer to rage and resentment. "Ah, you're that kid that was caught by that damn baldy... It's you! You must be the one ridiculing me and running your mouth behind my back! Am I right? It must be you... It must be you!"

Thales' heart felt ice-cold.

.....

Rick cautiously drove the carriage while he forced himself to calm down. All the while, he felt the temperature behind his neck. Fortunately, everything was normal and the ghost did not appear.

It would probably be a headache for Quide.

At that time, he approached the headquarters of the Black Street Brotherhood. Rick breathed a sigh of relief.

"Accountant!" Came Layork's voice, the assassin from the Brotherhood shouted about twenty feet away from Rick. Layork's face appeared from a distance as if it was under the torchlight. He seemed dissatisfied and asked, "Why did you come here at this time? This here is dangerous business! Even you with your account-balancing hands are thinking of joining the fun?"

Rick froze for a moment. As the carriage continued moving, he saw that the small public square in front of the headquarters was covered with torches.

All of them were standing quietly. All of them wore black cloth around them. The ones wearing these black clothes were members of the Brotherhood and there were at least a few hundred people.

Rick suddenly realized that almost all of the Brotherhood's manpower were here.

Rick quickly got down from the carriage. He hastily walked a few steps. Under the moonlight, he saw his superior, the fat Morris, who was also the big shot in the trafficking business. He was discussing something with a few figures with strange silhouettes. A two-meters-tall, blond giant; a mysterious figure in dark-red robes; and a fat, simple-looking man.

Rick was shocked; he recognized them.

These were big-shots from other places in the Brotherhood. There were even a few bosses that would normally not stay in Eternal Star City.

Rick moved through the fully equipped fighters that were armed with a variety of weapons from axes to knives, to blades or spiked maces as they sorted their equipment and walked straight to Layork.

"Layork, it is great to see... never mind. I won't speak of nonsense. What's going on tonight?"

Rick and Layork did not like each other, they met often simply because of their jobs, and they have a tacit understanding and agreement with each other.

However, the one who knew most about the situation and also the quickest person to ask would be Layork.

"The boss didn't tell you?" Layork pursed his mouth in disdain and threw him a glance, "As usual, confrontation with the Blood Bottle Gang. Besides the Mystic Gun and the infantry bows, we can use every other weapon..."

The famously efficient and ruthless assassin ran his hand over the scimitar behind his waist, as though feeling the sharpness of the blade.

Rick was startled. Confronting the Blood Bottle Gang...

The assassin took a deep breath. He then laughed and licked his lips, "Tonight, we will capture the Red Street Market."

.....

"Still no news from Yodel? What about the Sunset Temple?"

The middle-aged noble with gray hair was in front of a fireplace, facing a luxurious chair and asked somberly, "Patience, my friend. We have waited for twelve years, it does not matter if we were to wait a little longer."

The robust figure rose from the chair and grabbed the handle of a scepter that was inlaid with light blue crystals. Looking closely, the crystals of the scepter seemed to twinkle in a slow and steady rhythm.

"Our pointless conjectures here only casts doubt on Yodel's ability. Furthermore, is he not carrying the flame of the Lamp? I believe he is close to the target and simply needs to make a final confirmation." The robust figure said slowly.

The middle-aged noble gave a deep bow.

"I do not doubt Yodel's ability, nor have I ever underrated his loyalty. It is just..." The

man paused and sighed. "He is too calm and callous. Other than his unwavering loyalty, he is not interested in anything else. Just like twelve years ago. I am worried that he..."

The middle-aged man did not continue, the robust figure also did not immediately reply.

The robust figure carried the scepter and went to the floor-to-ceiling window. He looked out the windows at the resplendent lights of the great shrine in the distance.

Even the moonlight could not compete with the brightness of that shrine.

"Then prepare yourself and secretly proceed to the temple... Begin the moment there is news, there is no need to wait for Yodel's signal."

After a while, the robust figure slowly added, "I have no reason to doubt Yodel. When he needs to act, he will not hesitate.

"However, it is good to have more than one hand prepared."

(The next chapter is added here because the chapter was missing from the upload platform)

The First Drop of Blood

By the time Thales recovered, Quide had grabbed him by the neck and lifted him up.

Thales struggled as he held on to the hand strangling his neck. However, he could not seem to gather his strength. He tried desperately to open his mouth but could not breathe. His two legs kept kicking as he began to feel faint.

The hubbub around him sounded muffled, as though they were blocked by a thick cloth. Coria was crying, Ryan had curled himself up at the hole and trembled continuously, Kellet was sitting in front of the wall, terrified and whimpering.

Sinti and Ned screamed as they boldly rushed forward fearlessly. One held on to Quide's thigh, the other struck Quide's belly with his small arms.

Sinti was blown away and crashed into the water jar, spilling water all over the yard. Ned was ruthlessly struck by Quide. He screamed as he fell onto the ground, unable to get up.

Thales did not have the time or the mood to be surprised at Ned's courage, or Kellet's and Ryan's cowardice (he was quite certain of Sinti's actions). Thales firmly used his fingernails to dig into Quide's hand that held his neck. He wanted to break free so that he could breathe.

Suddenly, Thales' nail sank into the back of Quide's right hand, digging into a hollow wound. Thales' face had already turned red by then, so he did not hesitate and desperately dug into the wound.

"Argh!"

Quide screamed from the pain. He loosened his iron-grip and then threw Thales towards a wall. Thales felt dizzy and his throat felt sore. He leaned against the wall as he coughed uncontrollably.

Quide clutched his palm. On top of it was the wound made by Jala which had started bleeding again.

"Damn Jala Charleton! Damned brat!"

Quide endured the pain as he roared furiously and drunkenly.

Crack!

The ferocious Quide suddenly turned around and saw only the child from the seventeenth house, Ursula, frantically trying to escape through the door. The door that had just collapsed earlier from Quide's trampling could not support her weight and had cracked open.

"Haha. Are you trying to run?"

Quide grinned hideously and strode forward. He then grabbed Ursula's left leg.

"No! Don't!"

Ursula cried out as Quide lifted her up by her leg.

"Brat. Have you struck iron before? No? Haha. Don't worry, I'll teach you!"

Thales climbed up in pain and was only in time to see Quide swing Ursula's left leg

with both arms and smashed her head against the wall behind him.

Thales had just enough time to reflexively move out of the way.

The crown of the head made a compressed sound. It was the same sound as when he once saw the fruit seller smash open an Ellend melon.

That's right. We stole the Luminous Moon statue from that very person.

Coria's wail turned into a shrill scream. Thales was stunned and could not close his eyes in time. Red and white liquid splashed onto his face. It was warm, yet cold.

Ned had witnessed everything when he crawled up from the ground. He screamed as he collapsed. He then headed towards the dog tunnel leading towards the seventeenth house.

Quide opened his mouth and inhaled, looking intoxicated. It was as though he did not inhale air but black pine wine of the highest grade. This demon in human skin turned around and dropped whatever was left of Ursula. He then looked at Ned with a vigorous smile.

At that moment, Thales thought for a moment that Ned was small and nimble, and that Ned would be able to dig into the dog tunnel before Quide could reach him.

Dig into that hole and everything will be fine.

Dig and you will be safe.

Dig in.

Dig in.

Dig.

However, before Ned could dig halfway in, Quide grabbed Ned's legs.

"Are you the brat that had no money to give? Then what good are you?"

Ned screamed as he was dragged out of the hole by Quide.

"Scream! Your screams are not wretched enough! It is a pity that the water jar is broken. We cannot play fishing anymore."

Quide shook his head to dispel the dizziness caused by the alcohol. He gazed at Sinti who had just got up from the ground and the water jar beside him.

"That makes things easy."

Ned wailed and kicked. Quide grabbed his face and slammed him onto the ground. He then lifted the six-year old's right foot and ruthlessly stepped onto the center of the six-year-old beggar's back.

"Don't!"

Boom! Crack!

A heart-stopping crack resounded at the same time as Thales' heart-wrenching cry.

Everything in front of Thales blurred.

Boom!

Quide stepped a second time.

Boom!

A third time.

Crying out loud with the greatest effort ever, Sinti grabbed a fragmented piece of the water jar and charged towards Quide. Quide simply laughed and kicked away the fragment in Sinti's hand. He then grabbed Sinti's hemp collar and lifted him up.

Looks like I can't do anything.

Thales lowered his head. By the wall, Ursula's body was still quietly twitching. Ned was sprawled face-down on the ground, motionless.

I thought I was protecting them but I'm unable to do anything. I couldn't do anything.

Sinti roared as he kicked. Quide's high-pitched laughter became even more aggravated.

"Brat. Scream! Keep screaming! I love to hear you all scream! Maybe my mood will improve and I would let all of you go!"

Thales' eyes turned dim as he recalled a familiar scene.

"Deviant behaviour. This is what we define human behavior that opposes social norms. An average person is more accustomed to calling it crime. However, we must know that crimes are only one small part of deviation. What we are concerned about is not the act but the meaning at a social level and its comprehension. Durkheim was one of the earliest scholars to start sociology. He also looked at deviation from the functionalist angle...

"One viewpoint is that the enforcement and punishment of deviant acts is one of the ways the authority shapes and models the basic structure of society..."

This was a fragment of the memories from Thales' past life. He had recovered some of it just a moment ago.

"Demon! You demon!"

Just then, Sinti's roar and kicks dispersed Thales' vision.

"Yes! I am a devil!" Quide laughed. "Tell me, how would a devil cook you?"

Thales took a deep breath.

Damned bastard.

His mind was as clear as ever. He knew what to do. He knew what he should do. Thales clenched his teeth, turned around and rushed to a corner of the house. There, he grabbed a stone, lifted it up, and stretched his hand into the hole hidden underneath.

Quick. Quickly find it.

"Alright. Since you have guts, I'll leave you for last."

Quide laughed until his lips went crooked. He fiercely pulled Sinti's right leg until Sinti's face turned pale and then...

Crack!

It was dislocated.

Quide dropped Sinti and proceeded to stomp on his dislocated leg. Sinti tried to endure the pain but he still ended up howling tragically. Thales heard the screams, driving him to search faster.

Quide then left the yard and walked towards the inner part of the house. The bright moonlight shined through the half-collapsed roof and onto Quide's smile.

Ryan folded his arms. He stared at the floor as he tried to shrink deeper into the wall with his body.

Kellet trembled as he crawled out of the hole, wanting to pull Coria, who had turned silent from the hoarseness of her voice, to run away together with him.

However, Coria was seemingly paralyzed from fear. She sobbed and would not move. Kellet did not dare look over at Sinti, but just pulled Coria as though he was begging.

But Coria suddenly raised her head and then cried sorrowfully like a lamb. Kellet seemed to realize something and turned around... to see Quide's smiling face. He peed in his pants.

We're caught!

Thales found the thing he wanted and then forcefully yanked it out.

After that...

After that his right arm was grabbed by the mad, delighted Quide from behind.

"Did you think I would leave you out, brat? I know that you are the most cunning and most treacherous amongst all you bastards! Haha!" Quide gradually tightened his grip as he smiled proudly.

No.

Thales felt a tightening pain in his right arm. He struggled to turn around and attack Quide with what he found in his left hand.

"Look at that!" Quide said as though he had found a treasure. He turned and avoided

Thales' strike.

Then he grabbed the thing from the child's left hand.

"It's a dagger! Haha! Brat. You actually thought of attacking me with a dagger? Hahaha. What were you going to do? Stab my thigh?"

Quide pulled Thales up and laughed wildly.

Don't! Don't!

Thales thought desperately. The dagger.

He had stolen the sheathless dagger at the Sunset Pub. It was his last hope.

"Yo!"

Quide was surprised when he looked behind Thales. He saw a coin that had been uncovered when Thales yanked the dagger out out of the hole.

"Look at what I've found. Is that a silver coin? It's a silver coin! Hahaha. You really are a damned brat! You stashed a silver coin away!"

Thales wanted to struggle with his left hand but the strength of a seven-year-old was inadequate. He could only attack futilely at Quide's abdomen which was as sturdy as an iron sheet.

That silver coin was a gift from a noble woman at the Red Street Market. Thales did not lie.

The goosedown-clothed noble woman had given him twelve coppers, but there was also one silver.

Thales began to lose hope. Everything ends here. I have failed.

"For the price of lying..."

Quide ignored Thales' perfunctory punching and kicking. He simply grinned and picked up the silver coin with the dagger. He threw the silver into the air and then caught it again with the other side of the dagger.

Even today, the kingdom's Mindis silver was still valuable and rare. Engraved on its front was King Mindis the Third. This was a historical figure in Constellation and was well-known throughout the continent. There was also a motto inscribed in an ancient font.

'A King does not gain respect by virtue of his bloodline.

The bloodline's glory rests on the deeds of the King."

Thales could not understand these words at all. Thales had bravely asked the noble woman for its true meaning and got an answer.

Ah. Thales silently thought. I also wanted to learn words and study. I wanted to learn the knowledge and wisdom of this world.

The result...

Quide held the silver coin with the dagger. He waved the knife around in the air and seemed very satisfied with his skills. Seems like I have not regressed.

He then pulled Thales out to the yard and threw the silver coin into the bonfire near the yard.

"For the price of lying, I shall reward you with this silver coin."

Thales looked at the silver coin that was gradually turning black in the fire. He suddenly realized what Quide was going to do and kicked even more wildly.

It was at this moment when Thales saw from the corner of his eyes, the crippled Ryan, who had always been timid, approached Quide from behind and raised a stone in his hand.

Don't do it. Thales thought sadly. Ryan had never fought before. That stone is too small.

"Da!"

Ryan's strength was insufficient. The stone struck the back of Quide's neck, but it was enough to attract Quide's attention.

"Run! Ryan!"

"Run quickly!"

Thales, and Sinti who was holding his right leg in agony, shouted loudly.

Unfortunately, Ryan was a cripple. When he went begging one time, his leg was broken by a bad-tempered thief. After some time, he became crippled due to the lack of medical attention.

Ryan retreated in panic, turning around as he limped hurriedly.

Quide dragged Thales along as he turned around and chased Ryan. Quide quickly caught up with him. He was so angry that he laughed.

"Cripple!" Quide opened his mouth and panted like a wild boar, "That hit earlier was really great!"

Thump!

Ryan was kicked to the ground. His eyes were full of fear and regret.

"I... I..."

Without waiting for the frightened Ryan to finish, Quide took the dagger and plunged it into Ryan's right wrist.

"Argh!"

Ryan's blood-curdling scream was deafening that even Thales trembled.

"Aren't you a cripple? Don't you already have one leg broken?" Quide yelled in a frenzy, "In that case, you must be more balanced top and bottom!"

After that, Quide pulled out the dagger. The smiling expression on his face became more intense. With one hand, he pushed Thales to the ground, and then concentrated on Ryan.

Thales saw Quide knee Ryan in the stomach. Quide then raised the dagger that had been used to stab the wrist and started cutting that hand as though he was sawing wood.

Thales closed his eyes painfully.

"No! No! Argh! Argh! Don't! Argh!"

Ryan's tragic screams had turned into a continuous howl. Sinti bellowed angrily from the side.

Thales glanced at the still-weeping Coria or the quiet Kellet.

Please, let this all come to an end. Just let it end.

When Ryan's uninterrupted wails turned into painful sobs, the numbed Thales found himself lifted up by the collar again by Quide.

He felt something hot near him.

Thales opened his eyes and saw the handle of the dagger in front of him. On top of it was the silver coin.

The boiling hot silver coin that was burnt until it was black. Its scorching heat seemed to assault his face.

"Open your mouth!" Quide said with ruthless indifference.

Nearby, Ryan held his bloody right hand. His eyes no longer showed any emotion. He simply lay down on his side and trembled from time to time. Only a little bit of skin was left of his palm at the right wrist.

Thales coldly glared back at Quide.

"Are you not willing?" Quide shook his head and laughed, "Your eyes would work too."

After that, Quide grabbed the dagger and moved the blackened coin that was on the dagger towards Thales' eyes.

The blackened face of King Mindis slowly approached his eyes.

The inscription on it also became clearer.

'A King does not gain respect by virtue of his bloodline.

The bloodline's glory rests on the deeds of the King."

In that instant that the coin was about to be stuck into Thales' eyes.

"Argh!"

Thales roared loudly. He struggled violently and suddenly bit into Quide's little finger at the handle of the dagger.

Quide cried out hoarsely in pain. His body leaned back and the coin fell from the dagger, towards Thales' bare chest.

A burning heat struck him!

"Argh... No!"

The severe burning sensation brought sharp pain.

Thales could no longer bear the pain. He then opened his mouth to let go of Quide, then reached for the silver coin.

"B*st*rd!" Quide looked at his bloody little finger and broke out in anger. "I will give you a souvenir!"

Quide punched Thales and then rushed forward to overpower him. He used the dagger to press hard onto the coin on Thales' chest.

Hiss!

It was like the sound of an iron cooling rapidly, except that the material cooling it was flesh.

"Argh!"

Thales howled. His scorched chest emitted a burnt smell. He felt sharp pain as though all of his muscles were burning. Quide pressed the silver coin down for a full five seconds. He then stared at Thales' painfully distorted face before feeling that he had vented enough and released Thales.

As soon as Thales broke free, he pried off the silver coin that was stuck to his chest

despite the fact that it was still burning hot. The charred flesh, blood, and the silver coin fell onto the ground with a thud.

A drop of Thales' blood fell on the ground and quickly evaporated. Thales simply lied down on the ground. His tears poured endlessly.

Damn. Wasn't I supposed to be an adult? Why do I still cry?

"What a pity. Swallowing it or pushing it against the eye would have been better." Quide carefully picked up the silver and threw it into the fire. "Never mind. Let us do it again."

Thales closed his eyes tightly. The burning pain in his chest had not diminished. Instead, it grew increasingly painful. It was like an onslaught of pain; it was growing.

Let me cut out Quide's throat. That would be great. He said silently in his heart.

When Thales opened his eyes again, he just stared at Quide indifferently. Quide looked at those lifeless eyes and got bored.

"Hey, brat. Don't want to play anymore?" Quide kicked Thales. Thales simply looked back at Quide coldly.

"Come," he thought, "This time, it would be the eyes and nose. Up to you. Either way, ever since I transmigrated, I could not accomplish anything, right?"

Quide looked at Thales' eyes and confirmed Thales' indifference. When he was still a debt collector, he hated debtors that had this expression. This meant that no matter how he tortured them, he would not get any money.

Quide spat, feeling bored. He felt as though his delight had been destroyed.

I have wasted too much time.

However, when he turned around and saw the two beggars in the walls, his eyes turned bright again.

Coria was crying and Kellet glanced fearfully. Quide stretched his hand out to one of the six holes in the sixth house, reaching out for the youngest girl.

Thales pupils immediately refocused. Sinti looked at the scene alarmingly. Even Ryan forgot about his broken hand and raised his head.

No. No! That's Coria. She is the youngest here. That child!

The burning feeling in his chest grew hotter. His muscles seemed to burn.

Coria simply wailed. She was only four.

Bastard! How dare you!

"Coria!"

"Demon! Come to me!"

"You dare! You wouldn't!"

Thales, Sinti, and even Ryan who was still holding on to his broken hand, all frantically crawled towards Quide. However, with a swing of his leg each, they were swept to the corner of the wall.

"You cannot hurt her!" At this moment, a figure obstinately blocked the hole in the wall.

This was Kellet who had been so frightened he withdrew again into the hole. At this moment, he courageously stood in front to protect Coria.

But Thales shook his head in pain. No. You're not enough.

Kellet's fist was easily seized by Quide.

"Don't interrupt my entertainment" Quide laughed. He then cut Kellet's neck without any hesitation, interruption or restriction whatsoever. Kellet widened his eyes as though he could not believe what just happened.

Thales fell to the ground paralyzed. Ryan seemed to have a mental breakdown as he laughed and cried. Sinti simply hammered the ground ferociously.

Kellet's trachea was broken and his blood spurted out of his arteries. Quide then pushed Kellet to the side.

Coria wept more and more uncontrollably.

"Don't! Don't catch me! I am a very good child! I do not have typhoid fever! I do not!"

Quide held Coria's hair and carried the crying girl out of the hole like a pet.

He then picked up the silver coin from the bonfire with the dagger.

"Bastard! Damned bastard!"

Thales closed his eyes and roared with all his strength. He hated himself. He hated this damn world. He then watched Quide helplessly.

While the girl struggled desperately, the man took the silver coin that was heated a second time with the dagger and pressed it onto Coria's face.

Sobbing sounds of the children could be heard from the side while Coria's cries were no longer coherent.

Why did this happen?

Thales laid down on the ground as though he had lost all hope. His eyes were filled with despair and he was motionless. Only the burning pain continued to throb in his chest.

Quide worked the dagger and flipped the silver coin off the girl's face, making her scream sharply.

He breathed heavily and looked around, suddenly feeling bored.

Time to finish this up and go find the other brats. Wait. Wouldn't doing this be bad for the Brotherhood?

Quide's drunkenness gradually began to disappear.

Whatever. Since Rick and his thugs did not show up, it means that there's no problem.

He closed his eyes and shook his head. He then thought of using both hands to break the girl's neck.

Huh?

When Quide raised his left hand, he suddenly noticed something strange. Wasn't I just using a dagger to press the silver coin on the girl's face?

Dagger?

He did not think too much and continued to raise his left hand to place on Coria's neck.

At that moment, Thales who was lying on his stomach and had given up hope, suddenly touched something with his right hand that made him tremble.

Dagger?

Without any hesitation he got up, concealing his hand behind his back.

Then, everything happened abruptly. In Sinti's eyes, the terrified Thales who had still been on the ground suddenly attacked.

"Go and die!"

The seven-year-old transmigrator released two lives' worth of furor at Quide's neck. He made a stab and a twist.

"Annoying!"

Quide had already noticed his movements and carelessly made a reflexive push with his elbow. Thales was sent flying by Quide.

Boom!

Thales' head hit the edge of a hole and was instantly dazed. However, he tenaciously lifted his head and looked at his hand.

There. The dagger stolen from Sunset Pub. A sharp dagger with blood on it.

At that moment, everything seemed still. Quide froze for a moment. He lowered his head in surprise as he looked at Thales, who was coughing on the ground after he was sent flying.

Quide's surprised gaze did not last long. He had already realized what happened to himself. He suddenly let go of Coria and touched his neck with trembling hands.

A warm, moist, and sticky feeling flowed down his collarbone and onto his chest and abdomen. In full view of Quide, the damned brat Thales struggled but steadily stood up from the ground. Thales held the dagger with a trembling right hand. Although he was trembling, it was stable.

At that moment, Quide felt somewhat flustered. He absent-mindedly placed both his hands at his neck, terrified. He desperately tried to cover the wound that was squirting blood, but his trembling hands and chin seemed to revolt against his intentions. The blood that was bright red like a dye spurted relentlessly from his artery.

Quide clenched his teeth. He felt his legs turn soft so he took a step back. However, this made him fall softly to the ground and no longer able to get up.

The burning feeling in his chest continued but Thales lifted up his head. In the eyes of Sinti's and Coria's fearful gaze, and Ryan's unfathomable laughter, Thales was watching Quide with staunch indifference.

One word at a time, he spat out, "Go to hell, trash."

Quide clenched his teeth tighter as he became angry again. However, unlike before, when the flames of fury arrived, Quide's vision turned darker. Everything seemed further and smaller before turning faint and falling apart.

His eyes protruded out as though it was going to pop out of their sockets as he glared unwaveringly at Thales. He then stretched out his trembling hand that had been stabbed by Jala towards Thales, pausing every now and again.

He opened his mouth and said in a hoarse voice, "Damned... brat..."

He swept his bloody hand past Thales' cold face.

Those were 'Blood Axe' Quide Roda's last words in Errol.

Chapter 6

Escape Plan

"Bite on this piece of wood tightly and you will feel better. Sorry, I... I can only think of this solution."

Thales furrowed his brows and kneeled in front of Ryan.

The crippled child beggar was half-lying on the floor with his upper body against the wall. Holding up his broken, badly injured, and almost torn off right hand that was steadily bleeding out, he stared blankly at Thales who was sharpening a dagger against a blunt piece of stone. He let Thales insert the piece of wood into his mouth.

Behind Thales, the little girl Coria sat on the stairs between the house and the yard with a blank expression. The area on the left side of her face which was burned by the silver coin was already treated with medicine and covered with a piece of cloth.

She held the charred silver coin tightly in her hand.

The little girl opened her eyes wide and looked at her surroundings, even rising her head to look at the moon after a moment before she let out a nervous chuckle.

Behind her, Quide's wide-eyed corpse leaned against the broken wall.

Thales felt nauseous.

That sensation... that of thrusting metal into flesh and blood, kept returning. It would occasionally appear in Thales' sword arm.

Thales sighed, suppressing the strange discomfort that came with killing someone for the first time. The burn on his chest was still aching, taking away a lot of his attention from that matter.

He had to kill Quide—Thales did not regret it at all.

The moment he thrust the dagger into Quide's neck and watched him fall with all

his unwillingness to admit defeat, Thales had even felt a surge of satisfaction rush into his heart.

That was the pleasure of revenge.

At that moment, it was as though all his grievances and hatred were soothed and released.

Simple yet brutal, effective and straightforward.

"However," Thales closed his eyes, and said to himself repeatedly, 'I must not fall in love with this feeling.'

After all, he took away a life.

He might have killed a fellow human because he had no choice. However, no matter the circumstances, it was not something to be proud of.

He definitely did not kill Quide so that he can become scum like him.

'More importantly...' Thales turned and looked at Coria. He sped up his sharpening of the dagger.

'What these children just experienced was most likely the most crucial point in their lives.'

Another vision from his past life bloomed in front of his eyes. The light from the projector and the words on the slides appeared like crashing waves.

"For the thesis I will be talking about in this lecture, its literature review mainly focuses on the field of psychology. From the perspective of developmental psychology, one's childhood and teenage years are the most vital in shaping his or her mind and personality. According to Bloom's longitudinal studies, the environment, interactions, and behaviors one experiences at those stages are strongly correlated to their future character and psychological development. Plenty of theoretical studies also suggest that this influence might even last through their whole lives..."

Thales shook his head and kept the newfound memory deep inside his heart.

The psychological health of the child beggars was only secondary—the problem at

hand was survival.

Thales suppressed the nausea inside his heart and shifted his focus to the dagger in his hand.

This dagger was shorter than an adult's forearm. It had a single cutting edge, the tip curving slightly to the side. A black leather belt was wrapped around the wooden handle to prevent slippage while both sides of the blade were smooth... 'Hmm?'

Thales suddenly discovered that, after being soaked in fresh blood, two engraved alphabets appeared on one side of the blade.

JC.

'JC?'

Thales' gaze shifted slightly and his heart jolted.

'Haha, no matter how many more tricks I have up my sleeves, how many more plans I concoct, or how much more intelligent I am,' thought Thales, 'none are as useful as this dagger called JC.'

Thales' gaze turned icy. In one moment he was sharpening the knife edge, but in the next he appeared beside Ryan's broken hand.

Cha!

Thales cut without hesitation.

The blade severed what little skin and flesh was left between Ryan's palm and wrist.

"Hmm! Hmm... hmph hmph!"

Ryan's whole body started convulsing vigorously like a Mariahilf river prawn that has just been dropped into boiling water.

He bit hard on the piece of wood, letting out a horrifying sound from his throat. His eyes were shut tightly from pain and his face was distorted in an over the top manner.

Tears and snot flowed ceaselessly.

Thales immediately took the piece of cloth that had been applied with medicine, though it was just some Urth Dragon Leaves, and wrapped it around Ryan's severed wrist. He made a tight knot on it.

'Hopefully this will help in stopping the bleeding and prevent infection, or else... '

Thales looked towards the fire and shook his head.

Ryan was still convulsing in pain. Thales pressed down on his severed wrist with one hand and embraced him with the other.

"Hang on, Ryan, it will be over soon. Hang on!" Thales shut his eyes and softly comforted Ryan. Ryan's hair brushed over the burn wound on his chest, causing another fit of unbearable pain.

Thales looked to the other side. Kellet, Ned and Ursula were lying quietly under the moonlight.

It was as if they were asleep.

Ryan's breath started to calm. However, Coria started crying softly again.

"Thales... *sniffs* I'm so scared. Coria really doesn't have typhoid, Coria has already recovered..."

Thales let go of Ryan and turned to embrace Coria in his arms, taking care to avoid the burn wound on her face as he patted her gently.

"It's okay now, Coria. Everything is okay now."

'I'm sorry.

'I couldn't protect all of you.'

"Thales!"

Thales opened his eyes and saw Sinti, who was gasping as he ran. He calmly asked, "How is the situation outside?"

Sinti sustained the fewest injuries out of all the children in the sixth house. Life as a child beggar allowed them to pick up plenty of first aid skills such as the setting of

bones, or even the breaking of bones, and after Thales fixed his dislocated leg, he sent him out to gather information. He also asked him to gather information and spread news to warn the other members of the Brotherhood who might come.

"No one from above is coming. Not Rick, not the thugs either. There's no one from the Brotherhood. It seems like no one from outside the Abandoned Houses knows about this."

Sinti was the eldest among them and had worked with Thales for quite some time, he immediately answered Thales' biggest concern.

"It seems like Quide went to quite a number of houses, some of the children managed to escape. But, excluding our house and the seventeenth house, at least six or seven houses show no movement inside at all."

Thales' gaze dimmed. The sixth house was not the nearest Abandoned House to the front gate. He could already sort of guess the fate of the child beggars in those houses.

"Right now, all the child beggars already know what happened. They are spreading rumors among themselves that the Brotherhood is planning to kill us all. Some of them are hiding in the houses, too afraid to come out, but most of them ran out to the streets, and some even want to escape."

Thales' eyes lit up, "Wait, you mentioned that all the thugs are not around anymore?"

Sinti knew what Thales was thinking. He shook his head and bitterly spoke, "It's no use, the front gate is locked from the outside. Karak and the people from his house are shouting in front of the gate, but no one came. There's no way for us to escape unless we can cross through the moat and the thorns inside."

"Do we..." Ryan struggled to stand up while hugging his right hand, his face was pale as he asked, "Do we have to escape? We can stay here and wait till the morning, and when Rick and the others come, we can tell them that Quide went crazy himself..."

"No!" Thales firmly cut Ryan off, "Quide died in our house. If they manage to find the culprit, we will surely die. Even if they can't find the culprit, they will still blame it on us. Moreover, Quide's father is one of the elders in the Brotherhood, they won't let this go easily."

"Plus," Thales looked at Ryan coldly, "Do you want to wait for them to send the next

Quide over? Even if the next ringleader is not someone like Quidе, when he knows that his predecessor died under the hands of child beggars, do you expect him to feed and serve you well, then kneel down and beg you not to kill him?"

Ryan, Coria and even Sinti could not quite understand what Thales just said. The three of them blinked in confusion.

Thales looked at them and lowered his head in exasperation. He sighed and said, "Ha... to put it simply: we must escape."

"Oh."

The three children nodded their heads in unison.

Thales shook his head helplessly.

Another scene suddenly appeared in front of his eyes.

Snow was falling on the almost empty streets. A graceful figure was skipping in front while he kept talking.

"...Therefore, in his book, based on his observation along with historical data, which is the origination of capitalism in Europe, Weber mocked Marx's theory that the economic base determines the superstructure..."

"Although I don't understand what you are talking about, it all sounds very intellectual."

"Ha... in short, it means that Weber is looking down on Marx."

"Oh, I see. Let's go for hotpot then!"

"You were the one who asked me about my class today, can you not change the topic so quickly? And why is it that you can do it so naturally?"

"It's decided then, Korean barbeque! Strike Freedom, attack!"

"Weren't you talking about hotpot just now- Hey don't push me- And what is Strike Freedom- I told you not to push me-"

Thales shut his eyes tight and chased away the illusionary memory that surged back from the void.

Lately, his memories had been surging back towards him more frequently, "past incidents" came back to his mind one by one.

But please let it not be now.

It cannot be now.

There were more important things to do right now.

Thales opened his eyes and realized that the three children were waiting for his decision.

He stood up quietly and pulled Ryan up with him while taking a deep breath.

"First of all, we must remove Quide from the sixth house while there is no one outside. Although he is super heavy, we can't let anyone know that his death is related to us within the next few hours."

"After that, Sinti, start spreading word to everyone, discreetly. You must not let anyone know that you are deliberately spreading it. Tell everyone that, at the bottom of the moat on the left side of the fourth house, five of the thorns are loose. Remove them and use a slab of stone or something to press the remaining two thorns down. That way, we can escape from the houses."

Sinti was surprised. "You... you found the secret passage in the moat?"

"Secret passage?" Ryan and Coria also looked as if they were shocked.

Thales did not reply but tapped Sinti's shoulder instead and said, "Go."

The secret passage was not dug by some senior child beggar with great abilities.

This so-called secret passage was dug by Thales twice per week while he went off to beg at the Western City Gate, which always allowed him to return late. Using a dagger, tree vines, linen, and a corrosive agent from the pharmacy, he dug secretly for four years.

It was totally like "The Shawshank Redemption" in Errol.

As for that myth, it was just sheer illusion.

There was never any savior, was there?

Thales patted Sinti's shoulder again, and the latter nodded his head. As he was about to turn, he scratched his head like he suddenly thought of something, then with a voice filled with doubt, he asked,

"Why do we have to tell everyone? Can't we just escape by ourselves? If there's a lot of people, everyone will be fighting to get ahead and that will slow us down."

'No,' Thales thought. 'The Brotherhood are not stupid. Every single street and corner in all three lower districts are full of their spies. Even the outskirt area outside the Western City Gates is full of their lackeys. For a few child beggars who are not even ten, even if we manage to escape, it's very difficult to escape the Brotherhood.'

Thales' original escape plan was due to be carried out in half a year. Within that time, he would have been able to completely gauge the pattern and rhythm of the Brotherhood's spies that were placed between the third lower district and Red Street Market. He would have also obtained materials from Sunset Pub and Grove Pharmacy, greatly increasing their chances of escape.

As long as they can reach the Red Street Market.

But right now... right now, it was not the best opportunity at all.

However, for survival, they must escape immediately. Disasters always strike unexpectedly, did they not?

That was why he must turn the sixth house's private escape plan into a collective commotion of all the child beggars.

If the children in the sixth house were the only ones missing, it would be too obvious, and the Brotherhood would swiftly track them down. With more people, although their escape would be slow, it was safer and more discreet.

However, if he were to explain these reasons one by one...

Thales raised his head and looked at Sinti. His piercing gaze made the latter a little uncomfortable.

"Sinti, do you remember the pact that we made four years ago?"

Sinti was momentarily stunned before he lowered his head in thought.

When he looked up again, his gaze spoke of determination.

"Of course." Sinti looked at Thales, whose height only reached his shoulders, and said slowly, "You do all the thinking, and my job is to carry them out."

Thales nodded solemnly.

"Let's escape together!"

.....

Jala Charleton idly watched the last customer exit Sunset Pub, then she rose lazily to clear his glass.

There were few customers today, especially members of the Brotherhood. Most of them were dispatched to become part of that "big operation". Even the cook, Edmund, had left with a chopper. Apparently, he was going to return a debt of gratitude.

The old man had not returned for a long time, either.

'Boring.'

Jala glanced at the wall clock, it was half-past three in the morning—still a little early.

But then again, the clock was a little slow.

'That clock is super old,' thought Jala, 'even the rear compartment that holds the Eternal Oil is rusty. Carelessly mixing Eternal Oil with rust drastically reduces its efficiency.'

She had to think of a way to convince the old man to spend some money and get a new clock.

Although Sunset Pub had plenty of businesses, no tax officers from the town council ever came to collect any tax.

("For the sake of the king, I will give the tax collector two of my middle fingers!"–Jala)

There were no clueless idiots who came to collect protection fees either.

("Each of you pay a hundred coppers, and I will protect your fingers from being chopped off by me. What do you think?"–Jala)

Even their stocks were obtained at a discounted price through Black Street Brotherhood's internal sources.

("Nayer Rick, as the person in charge of accounts, quickly tell our brothers lying on the floor and this knife of mine what price you will be offering us for the stock. Hmm?"–Jala)

Surely, they can afford to spend some money on a new clock?

That stingy old man.

Jala shut the front door and finished up work at the bar counter. She then set down her apron and wash cloth, tightened her leather pants, blew out the Everlasting Light on the front counter (such an ironic name) and walked into the kitchen. It was still a little early today. Based on practice, after finishing up her training, there would still be...

The next moment, Jala's countenance turned cold and harsh.

She immediately lowered her body and bent her knees into a position where she can exert energy easily. The Wolf Limb Blade on her thigh was in her left hand in the blink of an eye.

The tip of the knife flew forward like lightning.

Tong!

The Wolf Limb Blade had savagely hit a beer barrel!

Only a small part of the blade stood out of the barrel, the handle still shaking.

"Ah!" A little girl screamed in alarm.

Jala slowly straightened herself, sheathed the other Wolf Limb Blade in her right hand back into her boot, then lit the Everlasting Lamp beside her.

The light flooded the dim kitchen and revealed a few small figures.

"Jala, er..." Thales, who was scared stiff by the thrown Wolf Limb Blade, forced a smile and raised his quivering right hand before he waved unnaturally. "Hi... it's me."

Jala glared coldly at him, still silent.

Her gaze was both piercing and frightening. Coria moved her body closer to Thales in fear.

Jala suddenly walked towards them.

Thales could feel the three child beggars behind him take a step back.

"I know," Jala said coolly, "otherwise, I would have aimed at something else other than the beer barrel."

Jala went in front of Thales and yanked the Wolf Limb Blade, which was two inches away from Thales' left ear, out of the beer barrel. As if demonstrating her power, she flourished the blade around before putting it back in her boot.

"And, you brat..."

Thales rolled his eyes inwardly and raised up his hand in reflex to protect his forehead.

But a slim finger was already poking firmly on it.

"Ah! Ouch!"

"You must call me big sister Jala!"

.....

"I didn't see Edmund when I came in through the back door, so I decided to check out the kitchen..."

They were now at Sunset Pub's cellar. The three other child beggars were leaning against huge sacks filled with food. Although they seemed restless, they did their best to dig into the pieces of white bread in their hands. It had been a long time since they had good food like this.

Further away from them, Thales sat on a beer barrel that was twice his height. He was on eye level with Jala Charleton, who crossed her arms and had a leg against the wall. She was languid, but still exuded her signature confidence.

If he were still in his past life, Thales would have slowly admired her from top to bottom. He would then raise his head to look at the sky while savoring the memory and marveling at the world's beauty.

Heh, you were wondering about what Thales would be doing after that? Bullshit. Of course, he would return home alone and do whatever he needed to do.

As for now? Sorry, but his body was still too young for that.

"Get straight to the point. Why did you come to me?" Jala's countenance was still cold, and she immediately went straight to the point.

Thales was used to that. He first met Jala four years ago at the rubbish heap behind Sunset Pub. This "big sister", who was only about eighteen or nineteen at that time, was already talking and acting that way.

He knew that this was just who she was.

"Quide went crazy and killed almost half the child beggars in the Abandoned Houses."

Thales spoke solemnly while clenching his fists.

'God. Damn. It.'

Ever since Jala saw that these child beggars were covered in wounds, she already had her suspicions regarding what happened earlier.

Without batting an eye, she started cursing Rick inwardly. 'This accountant, I knew that nothing good would come out of you forcing Chaca Wine into Quide's mouth.'

'Why did I agree to it, all for ten gold coins?'

'Half the child beggars.

'Ten gold coins?'

Jala's expression dimmed.

Besides... this incident will definitely anger the Brotherhood.

"No one came to stop him, nor did anyone rescue us. We had no choice but to escape by ourselves," Thales said gravely, the incident from a few hours ago replaying in his mind.

Jala said nothing and looked at him glumly.

In the end, Jala closed her eyes and sighed.

"I get it, you guys can hide here for a day. Don't worry, with me around, that gorilla wouldn't dare to come here. If he comes, I will cut off his d*ck- I mean, hand."

Jala glanced at the other three child beggars and frowned. She could tell the new injuries apart from the old ones, especially the child whose right hand was wrapped in a piece of cloth.

"When Edmund returns, I will ask him to find Rick and the others from above. Having done something like this, Quide won't be able to escape—this bastard, why did he not die earlier?"

Jala suddenly felt dispirited. She lowered her leg to the floor and stood up.

Thales' gaze darkened. He looked at the three child beggars and took a deep breath, then looked towards Jala.

"There's some big operation going on in the Brotherhood today. I guess that's why the defences and patrol systems are lax. To be able to escape, you guys must have... Ah, forget about it. I'll go get some medicine, and if you guys need a doctor- wait, brat, are you okay?"

While Jala was busy talking to herself, she suddenly realized that Thales, who was standing in front of her, did not look right. His body was also full of injuries. His clothes were torn to pieces, and his right sleeve had fresh blood on it.

Wait.

This brat's gaze...

Looked a little off.

Jala went in front of Thales and dragged him off the beer barrel. She then kneeled and held Thales' shoulder while looking straight into his eyes.

Jala's gaze suddenly turned somber and urgent.

"Brat, you... What happened to you?"

Thales was a little afraid to look at Jala's eyes. However, in a mere few seconds, he managed to compose himself and firmly raised his head.

Thales could hear his own voice. It was calm as usual—without a tremble.

"Jala, Quide is dead..."

"I killed him."

Chapter 7

JC

Five hours ago.

Lorbec Deira, forty-three years old, was a Class One director of the city defense team, the Western Police Station, and he was responsible for safeguarding the western side of Eternal Star City.

Twenty public security teams, police officers of various ranks from the entire center, and countless civil servants. These people were all under his subordination.

Over a hundred police officers armed with superior, compact equipment such as riot control sticks, mini crossbows, and anti-force shield. Almost three hundred high-quality soldiers armed with anti-mystic equipment such as anti-mystic swords, arched light shields, Eternally New Armors, and spell-breaking bows and arrows. Finally, he had twenty Swordsmen of Eradication as elite garrisons. All of them answered only to his command.

All of this was seldom heard of for a low-level noble, especially since Lorbec's father was only a little lord in the western part of the country, Keira County.

If he had not associated himself with the Covendier family, he would not have become Eternal Star City's Director of Department for Western City Police Station at such a young age. In this splendid relationship, where he pledged fealty to the Covendier family and obtained an official position in return, there was only one tiny imperfection.

He was responsible for six patrol areas in Eternal Star City: the three western districts, and the three lower districts.

Yes, those were the frontlines of the bloody battle between the Blood Bottle Gang and the Black Street Brotherhood.

A tiny imperfection.

Imperfection?

Nonsense!

Goodness gracious, this was a total calamity!

Oh, he was also responsible for the patrolling of the Western City Gate along with the safety of the streets.

As he took over the position, his white-haired predecessor warned him.

"You must remind your followers: even when they lead a team and exit the barracks, pass through the western districts, the lower districts and head towards the Western City Gate..."

That was right, his predecessor believed that the public security teams who were responsible for keeping the western portion of the city safe could only patrol at the Western City Gate, and that police officers could only enforce the law there.

"You must remember-

"For the sake of your money, when you pass by the three western districts, you must be polite and friendly.

"For the sake of your life, when you pass by the three lower districts, you must be careful and pay attention to your steps.

"For the sake of your position, when you reach the Western City Gate, you must be conscientious, energetic and ready for action!"

Lorbec soon understood why.

The Blood Bottle Gang, who were active in the three western districts, had deep roots within the district and a lengthy history. They had a lot of dubious relations with powerful people in the court and regularly pay significant sums as "tribute" to the city defense team. That was why for the sake of their wallets, whenever they passed by the western districts, they had to be friendly and full of joy, turning a blind eye to whatever the gang did.

The Black Street Brotherhood who forcibly occupied the three lower districts was

ruthless and violent. Half the unsolved crimes in the kingdom were linked to them. They did not go easy on the officers either. That was why, for the sake of survival, when passing by the lower districts, they had to be alert and observant—they must move fast and not linger without reason.

The Western City Gate was Eternal Star City's façade, all the important people from foreign countries, various nobles, temple officers, and adventurers would pass through the gate while visiting Eternal Star City. Plenty of foreign affairs disputes, royal power struggles, religious clashes, and civil conflicts took place there. The elders of the monarchy kept a close eye on the Western City Gate too. That was why, for the sake of their positions, when they carried out their duty there, they must be fair, professional, and willing to selflessly serve the people.

Having said that, in the three years since Lorbec took over the position as director of Western City Police Station, half of his hair had turned white, and the wrinkles on his face increased by three lines. And because of his erratic schedule, his wife protested constantly by giving him the silent treatment in bed, and it was understandable why she did so.

Right now, Lorbec was sitting in his office, gazing out the window at the moonlight with a worried expression.

He did not want to work overtime either, but a big shot decided to pay him a visit, and he had no choice but to work overtime.

Also...

It was not the work he was worried about, it was the brainless man working for him in front of him.

Kohen Karabeyan.

The twenty-two-year-old Kohen was promoted to Class Two police officer cum third public security team's leader two months ago. He had managed to do this due to several factors.

One, his fighting skills were exceptional even when compared to the Swordsmen of Eradication.

("It would be even better if I can defeat that lunatic Miranda."—Kohen)

Two, his status was also unbelievably prestigious.

("Ha... old man, it would be even better if you were the king, then I could be a prince- Ouch, dad! Why are you hitting me?"-Kohen)

Finally, his military experience was hard to come by among young nobles. After he was discharged from the military, he became Western City Police Station's elite.

("Damned old man! I didn't even sign anything, why was I 'discharged'? You must have shamelessly- Ouch! Why are you hitting me again?!"-Kohen)

("They all say that it's because I have a good dad. But, old man, you must be surer than anyone else that I obviously don't have a good dad- Ouch, ouch! Old man, if you hit me again, I won't talk to you anymore!"-Also Kohen).

At this moment, Kohen was wearing a neat and stately officer cap. A few strands of beautiful blonde hair could be seen behind his cap. His blue Constellation uniform enveloped him snugly, accentuating his balanced, muscular physique, and he wore non-reflective black army boots. Combined with his determined, handsome, and heroic countenance, he was undoubtedly the "lady killer" of the capital.

'What a pity, if only I were twenty years younger or dispatched to Eternal Star City earlier, the noblewomen would probably be screaming for me, too.' These were Lorbec's thoughts as he daydreamed.

That was because the young and heroic "lady killer" was speaking non-stop with a tone full of honor. He firmly explained his opinions to Director Lorbec while patting on his own chest resolutely, as if trying to convey his determination to his boss.

"Sir, as I said just now, I believe that it is not ideal for us to clear all our defenses at Red Street Market! Especially tonight! A huge riot might erupt between the Blood Bottle Gang and Black Street Brotherhood! Also, I received information from my subordinate that the Black Street Brotherhood will come before our headquarters and..."

"You have spies in Black Street?" Lorbec's interest was slightly piqued. He yawned, interrupting the police officer.

"Hah, it was indeed a little difficult to place a spy among those lunatics in the Brotherhood," Kohen shyly scratched his head and grinned, "But thanks to my intelligence and expertise..."

"Idiot! You must be suicidal!"

Director Lorbec's sudden outburst created quite a commotion. Even Miss Jorah, the beautiful, redheaded secretary who was walking past the door with a stack of documents, stumbled from shock.

"Do you think that just because you got third place in the Class One Swordsmen of Eradication's final assessment, the Brotherhood won't be able to touch you? Do you think that just because you are from the Karabeyan family, the Blood Bottle Gang wouldn't dare to touch you? Most importantly, do you think that-"

Director Lorbec was furious, and his voice became louder and louder. Kohen, who was so chatty a while back, was stunned into silence.

"-just because you are more handsome than me, you can order your direct superior around?"

Outside the door, Miss Jorah's hands quivered and dropped the documents that she had been picking back up.

"Erm, director, that is a bit out-of-topic. Although I'm handsome, the Black Street Brotherhood..."

"Shut up! Idiot!"

Lorbec's embarrassment turned to anger. He suddenly felt that it was not unreasonable that his old friend was always hitting his son.

Lorbec paused to catch his breath and spoke slowly, "I know how you feel. I was passionate once, too. Three years ago, when I was first transferred here, I thought of the same thing—to one day eradicate all the crime and darkness from the lower and western districts so that the people can live without fear any longer and walk the streets in peace.

"But do you really think that the Blood Bottle Gang and Black Street Brotherhood are your average street gangs? That I only have to dispatch twenty Swordsmen of Eradication that have the power of a hundred in each, a garrison of four hundred men, and also soldiers from the patrol team to eradicate them? The Blood Bottle Gang has two Mystics, eight Psionic Warriors, and the Strongest Twelve. The Brotherhood has three or four main Assassins, six Powerhouses, and Thirteen Generals. Do you know

how many of these people are supra class, or even at supreme class? What if one of these troublesome ones escapes? Also, they are spread all over the kingdom—their influence extends to the thugs, bandits, wanderers, and adventures in the Western Peninsula. They have a flawless web of information, deep-rooted social connections, huge and impressive businesses, circles of benefits that would affect large circles of people if you touch even a single one of them, and dangerous secrets. Do you think that they are harmless herbivores? Do you think that this is a battle between the Barren Bone people and the Orcs on the Western front? Do you think that my police officers and defense soldiers have no family and children, no social connections, no worries, and no burdens? Do you think that they are a suicide squad who would sacrifice their lives for you just because you order them to?

"Even if the two gangs are eradicated, what happens to the nobles who have secret relations with them? Then what about the administrative departments that rely on the ill-gotten profits of the gangs' 'protection fees' from the people for themselves to survive? Or their yearly tributes to the monarchy? What about the impoverished, the mobs, and the unemployed who will lose their source of income without the gang's restrictions and protection? What if the people stopped praying and donating to the temples when they are no longer threatened by the gangs? Without the violence of the gangs, what will happen to the pharmaceutical, alchemical, and farming industries in our city? What if items that can only be obtained through smugglings such as rare medicine and battle supplies are no longer available? How about the adventurers, mercenaries, and Psionic Warriors who might get restless after losing their income? Without the local gangs working and coordinating with the government, whether in the dark or not, what happens if the Kingdom's Secret Intelligence Department can't gauge the underground activities of foreign spies?

"All these miscellaneous and messed up things that cannot be ignored, have they crossed your mind at all?

"Why do you think I'm clearing our defenses in the Red Street Market tonight? You're right, let me tell you—it's because some big shot directly told me that the place will become the bloodiest battlefield tonight! No matter who goes near it, it will not end well for them! This is why I'm not only clearing our defenses. I'm also going to set up a notice for curfew and warn everyone not to go near that place. Why do you think we are working overtime tonight? It is so that in the morning, our people can cooperate with the governmental healthcare, fire brigade, and municipal departments to clear the dead bodies from the battlefield and clean up the wreckage brought by the battle!"

Lorbec stopped raging and panted, loosening his collar that was constricting his breath.

Kohen was silent, keeping his clenched fists at his sides.

"Now, team leader Kohen Karabeyan," Lorbec paused for a moment and spoke with his normal tone, "You can leave, reflect on this and think about why your father decided to send you to the most challenging police station in the entire Constellation, even in the entire Western Peninsula. Also, remember to help Miss Jorah pick up that pile of documents outside the door. That is all your fault."

The door opened, and Kohen slowly walked out. But at that moment, his gaze was dull with desolation and helplessness.

That made Miss Jorah, who was still picking up documents by the side, feel sorry for him.

'All this, everything that Director Lorbec said, I'm already aware,' Kohen thought inwardly.

He extended his hand towards the sword stand outside the director's office, wanting to retrieve his saber.

'If even the youngest director of the police station in the kingdom who is so experienced and sly does not even dare face these blood-leeching gangs who hide in the darkness, how can there be any change in the kingdom?'

Kohen slowly lowered his hand.

He stepped before Miss Jorah, who was crouching down and tidying up her documents. The secretary felt Kohen approach and blushed, wondering what tone she should use to thank him for his help.

'Hot-blooded?'

Kohen laughed bitterly in his heart.

'When I emerge from the piles of corpses at the Western Battlefield, this term can no longer be used to describe me anymore.'

'This is not hot-bloodedness.

Kohen lowered his head and clenched his fists, there was now anger and determination in his eyes.

'This is the right thing to do. This is something that has to be done.'

Miss Jorah's face became even redder. She suddenly realized that from Kohen's position, he would be able to see what was inside her uniform—a majestic cleavage comparable to the Sighing Mountains. Also, this was very important and must be repeated three times: he is very handsome, he is very handsome, he is really, extremely handsome!

'Red Street Market, huh?'

Kohen narrowed his eyes.

In the next moment, his features turned icy. Without even looking, he suddenly flipped over his clenched right fist, and it was as though a hurricane swept past the door to the director's office.

Whoosh!

When the hurricane dissipated, Kohen had disappeared.

Disappearing together with him was his saber from the sword stand.

Only the annoyed Miss Jorah was left, furiously tidying her windswept red hair.

The messy pile of documents beside her was tidied by the wind at some unknown point in time and had become a neat stack on the ground.

In the director's office, Lorbec helplessly shut his eyes and sighed.

Compared to the Red Street Market...

The big shot had requested something even more troublesome from him.

To find out from the Sunset believers as they passed by the Western City Gates the reason behind Sunset Temple locking up their inner altar.

'Those crazy believers.' Lorbec shook his head. When it came to religious matters, he did not dare to provoke them.

'Especially the Sunset Goddess, that shrew!

'Nope, nope, nope!'

Lorbec shook his head and removed the thought from his mind.

If it was six hundred years ago, the Sunset Goddess' temple priests would probably have thrown him into the judiciary for harboring such thoughts.

From this perspective, although the two Magic Empresses were also bad-tempered shrews, at least they have done something good.

'Nope, nope, nope!'

Lorbec shook his head and again, removed the thought from his mind.

No, the consequences for such thoughts would be more dire than the previous one.

.....

Back to the present.

"You said that you... you killed Quide?" Jala stared at Thales in shock, as if it was the first time she truly knew him.

"Yes, and," Thales calmly spoke to the beautiful but dangerous young woman, making a seemingly outrageous request.

"Please help the four of us to escape from the three lower districts."

Thales was not just trying his luck.

Despite his four years of begging, his world was not just full of darkness—apart from the few children in the same house, he also had Yanni, the helper in Grove Pharmacy, and this seemingly unapproachable female bartender. Speaking of which, was she really a mere bartender? Anyway, they were the few splashes of warm colors that Thales could find in this world.

Three years ago, if it was not for Jala, he would have been mauled to death by Morris' Angry Wolfhound while looking for food from the piles of rubbish outside Sunset Pub.

Morris grumbled for a long time after that, about how disloyal the Angry Wolfhound he had kept for six years had run out by itself and disappeared.

"Say that again?" Jala looked as though she just heard the most unbelievable thing ever. Something like "the demons from hell were coming back to earth", or "the Gods in heaven had descended upon the world."

"I was saying that I would like you to..."

Jala immediately cut him off.

"You just killed Quide Roda, the firearms leader; 'Iron Heart' Shanda Roda's only son, the head of the child beggar business in Eternal Star City who belongs to the most fearsome faction of power in Constellation, Black Street Brotherhood."

Having said that in one breath, Jala extended her slim index finger with a furious expression on her face and poked Thales' forehead hard.

"And having done that, you want me to protect you and betray the 'scariest force in Constellation's underworld', to help you evade the Black Street Brotherhood's inevitable manhunt, and... escape?"

"Erm, not entirely correct." Thales massaged the finger mark on his forehead while Jala leveled him a deadly glare. He wryly smiled. "But it's something like that."

Jala took a while to digest this information. Although Thales was feeling anxious, he waited quietly.

Jala refocused and sighed. Her expression very quickly became cold and nonchalant again.

"Hmph, to go against the entire Brotherhood for your sake? Do you think that I'm such a good person? No, I should say, do I look like a good person to you?"

"You don't have to show your face to the people in the Brotherhood!" Thales said hurriedly, "We have our own escape plan. You just need to provide us with some food and materials and help us hide from the Brotherhood's people on the roads through

the three lower districts to the Red Street Market! For you, this is easy!"

"Please!" Thales said earnestly, "You are the only one we can depend on, big sister Jala!"

However, Jala did not seem like she was buying it.

"Hmph, you are just a little child beggar."

Jala coldly chuckled. "No matter what, I am part of the Brotherhood. What makes you think that I won't immediately send you, a murderer who killed one of our leaders, along with your accomplices, to the Brotherhood?"

Thales was quiet for a moment.

Jala tilted her head and waited for him to answer with the ghost of a smile.

"Because I believe in you."

Jala froze. She could not keep up with Thales' logic.

"What?"

"Because I believe in you, I believe that you are different!"

Jala was stunned.

'Is he using the wrong script?

'How did he even manage to utter such a nauseatingly cheesy line?

'Hasn't this brat been quite mature all along?'

After all, he was raised by the Brotherhood in the beggars' nest through beatings. What is with this sudden... has he watched too many stage plays in the Dark Night Temple lately? A story of friendship between the heroine Jala and the prophet Kaplan?

Or was his head damaged by Quide's beatings?'

But what Thales said next after taking a deep breath stunned her speechless.

"I know that most of the people in the Brotherhood are scum and bullies. They are all lunatics whose hands are bloodied. They are wolves and demons in human skin. Concepts such as empathy and kindness, or a conscience, and sympathy— for them, these are worth lesser than the mud found in drains.

"They sell young ladies who have lost their families to whorehouses and beat desperate children into invalids, they sell drugs to girls in their teens, and extort honest businessmen until they are left with nothing, they drive farmers into starvation after they had to sell their children due to natural disasters, they bring those who can't pay their debts to the desert and sell them as slaves, and they harbor dark, ugly secrets together with degenerate nobles.

"But I also know that a lot of them are forced to do that for a living—some have no choice, some were influenced since young, some can't leave—a lot of them are doing it for survival. They all have reasons because they were forced into it. That is how they became the Brotherhood's most merciless and cruel minions.

"That's precisely why I believe that to be able to survive in such an environment while still maintaining the capacity for empathy, sympathy, kindness, and a conscience; to persist in doing deeds of kindness, being a good person, and to forgo the thought of earning easy, black money through your skills with the blade. To give the most abject drunkards a free glass of beer, to give those who are beaten and abused a coat, to save the life of a child you don't know from the rubbish heaps by killing the head of the Brotherhood's beloved dog in the process, and to go on helping, supporting and caring about that child for the subsequent four years..."

Jala frowned tightly. She did not realize that she had started biting her bottom lip.

Having said all that, Thales raised his head to look at Jala with sincerity and hope.

"Compared to being a pure scoundrel in the Brotherhood, a bad person who has abandoned their conscience and happily commits detestable crimes daily while becoming a person whose cup of sins are full, I believe that it is harder, more dangerous to do all these things..."

"Stop!" Jala raised her head in defiance. Her eyes were red, "Brat, you are not even related to me, how dare, how dare you..."

Thales cut her off without thinking.

"Jala Charleton! I have seen you chop a dog into three parts with a blade and cut off the finger of some troublemaker. I also know that all the customers in Sunset Pub fear you. Even the likes of Quide, Rick, and Morris are courteous towards you. When they knew that you were bringing down the price of their stocks, they could only curse in silence. I don't know the significance of the Charleton surname in the Brotherhood, but I could guess that your hands were once full of blood, too, and that you must have killed a lot of people. Perhaps, the people in your family and the ones around you are all members of the Brotherhood. Maybe all your family members have committed numerous crimes."

Jala did not cut him off. Her face became desolate and she sank into a dead silence.

"Actually, I don't really know whether you are a good person, or whether you can even be considered as one."

Thales quietly took out a dagger.

"I stole this dagger from your pub, but earlier that day, I said something to you: 'I don't even have a knife, how am I going to chop firewood?' Later that evening, this dagger appeared at the most obvious position in the storeroom. I've always known that."

"Before this, I thought someone else such as Edmund left the dagger there. But today, after the dagger was stained with blood, the initials JC appeared at the side of the blade."

Thales raised his head and gazed directly at Jala. The sparkle in his eyes made her heart jump.

"This should be the abbreviation of your name, JC. I recently heard your full name from Quide."

Jala clenched her teeth.

She did not even wonder why a child beggar, who never had the chance to study, would understand the letters on the dagger and could even spell her name.

"Jala Charleton, Miss JC, I want you to know, I must let you know that today, the knife you gave as a gift saved my life and the other three children over there, children who think that even normal white loaves are a king's meal."

Jala clenched her fists, and her eyes gradually gained focus.

'This damned brat.'

"That is why, even though I don't know who you were before, and neither do I know who you will be in the future, I somehow always thought that, well, I thought that..."

"You still want to be a good person! JC!"

Chapter 8

Departure Towards Fate

Half-past four in the morning, Red Street Market.

The fearsome assassin of the Brotherhood, Layork, appeared on top of a residence's roof like a phantom. The next moment, he appeared at an alley beside the residence. The following moment, he lurched towards a spacious street.

The floor was dyed red in blood and there were dozens of dead bodies on it. There were aces from the Brotherhood with black cloths tied around them, and members of the Blood Bottle Gang with red bandanas on their heads.

Layork growled again and disappeared. When he reappeared, he was on top of the signboard of the shop opposite.

It was as though, as though he was trying with all his might to escape something that was following behind him.

Battle cries can be heard from far away.

Suddenly, Layork's nervous countenance disappeared and was replaced by a calm but fierce expression.

The next moment, Layork's curved blade glided past his left armpit at a strange angle. Like a hunting black mamba, the blade stabbed the area to the left behind Layork like a bolt of lightning.

There was no one, but...

Shuah!

There was the sound of clothing being torn.

'A direct hit.'

Layork thought inwardly.

"'Phantom Wind Follower', Ralf," he softly uttered his opponent's name.

Layork picked up his curved blade and wiped the fresh blood from the tip. The nervous and rage-filled expression was gone from his face and replaced by veiled crazed cold-bloodedness.

"'The Silent Assassin', Layork. It's not a bad nickname."

"Is your luck really this good, or could you really sense my position?" An unfamiliar and gentle voice drifted over from all directions.

Layork maintained his original posture and kept quiet.

"What a waste it is, for an assassin like you to be in the Brotherhood."

As the voice settled down, a figure appeared on the street in front of Layork.

It was a man wearing a grey leotard. He had tattoos on his face and had green hair. He touched his left collarbone as he chuckled.

There, a wound was slowly bleeding.

Layork's pupil immediately constricted. In his attack just now, the blade was supposed to thrust perfectly into his opponent's heart and was supposed to be pulled back right after the instant it cut through the veins and artery in the heart.

In the end, the knife only grazed past his opponent's collarbone?

Layork was shocked for a moment, but he immediately recovered his calm form, preparing for the next attack.

An assassin must be perpetually confident that his next attack will be fatal.

If Rick were here, he would surely scoff at Layork's nickname of "The Silent Assassin". That annoying assassin... he was the one who always mocked him with the most amount of nonsense.

Even if it were Thales, he would just nod and say, "The Layork who battled with Felicia

wasn't very 'silent'."

However, the Layork right now had a dark gaze and did not move at all, standing like a statue on the signboard. Although he did not make a sound, his presence was an unsettling one.

The next moment, Ralf, who was known as "Phantom Wind Follower", changed his expression.

"Fine," Ralf muttered. "I can't believe that Karka was killed by Morris. Or should I say, as expected of the fatty, who is one of the Brotherhood's six Powerhouses?"

"I'm gonna go hide. But don't get me wrong, our game is not over yet, 'Silent Assassin'."

The next moment, Ralf disappeared.

At the same time, Morris, who was one of the Black Street Brotherhood's six Powerhouses and the person in charge of the human trafficking business appeared at the corner of the street with a fierce expression on his face. He had a group of elite fighters with him.

"Boss!" Layork flew down from the signboard in an instant and saluted Morris.

"It was 'Phantom Wind Follower' Ralf."

The big-sized Morris nodded and threw a corpse onto the floor.

It was a muscular man who looked like he was in extreme pain before dying. If the Brotherhood's exclusive doctor, Ramon the Strange Doctor were here, he would be able to discern quickly that the muscular man's lips are purplish, with blood surging towards the corner of his eyes, and that his nails are pinkish.

This man from the Sele Prairies in the Eastern Peninsula, "Battle Wolf" Karka, who was a Psionic Warrior from the nomadic tribes died of asphyxiation.

"Have you found the other people?" Morris asked with a serious expression devoid of any joy that came with the elimination of a strong opponent, even when the latter was a Psionic Warrior.

Layork solemnly shook his head, "No. But I bumped into transparent air barriers in a

few places. According to descriptions I have heard before—" The assassin paused for a moment and spoke with a serious and worried tone, "I suspect that a Psionic Warrior whom we don't know much about has gotten involved."

Morris did not say anything.

He only frowned.

"That was not a psionic ability, but an 'Air Wall'."

Under Layork's confused gaze, Morris clenched his teeth with an unpleasant expression.

"The one who got involved was the Air Mystic."

Layork froze.

'Mystic?

'The Air Mystic?

'The legendary person who is one of the two leaders of Blood Bottle Gang?'

Layork tried to recall any memory related to Mystics, but shockingly realized that in the few years he had been involved in the gang, he had not a single memory directly related to Mystics. All of them were rumors and legends.

The Mystics in Blood Bottle Gang were just like... just like the "Black Sword" in Black Street Brotherhood.

As he thought about the legends related to "Black Sword" in the Brotherhood, Layork shuddered.

For the sake of this ambush, which had no room for failure, the Brotherhood summoned almost all the elite fighters in Eternal Star City and assembled them into groups. The aim was to catch the opponents off guard and finish them off with one hit.

However, at the beginning of the attack, the elite fighters of the Brotherhood were forcibly dispersed by numerous gigantic waves of energy and strong wind. They could not even pass through certain areas of Red Street Market. In the blink of an eye, the originally powerful elite team was divided into a multi-headed snake that could not

coordinate its heads to its tail.

According to the poems sung by storytellers, in the end, Kilika the multi-headed snake was killed by Raikaru the hero by having its head chopped off one by one.

Judging from Morris' reaction, the team was without doubt separated by "the Air Mystic".

Soon after, Morris, the chubby Powerhouse of the Brotherhood fiercely spat out. His expression was profound but complicated.

'Such bad luck!' Morris was far less calm than he seemed. As he was thinking, he listened to the battle cries that kept coming towards his ears and identified their positions.

"This was supposed to be a glorious battle where we gather all our elites and conquer Red Street Market by catching them off guard...

"Even though there was such a huge commotion just now, the police station from Western City made no move at all. They were probably bribed. Even the entire Red Street Market is devoid of their presence... motherf*cker, we were ambushed by Red Bottle Gang."

'Moreover... '

Morris clenched his teeth. He was thinking non-stop and his heart rate increased slowly with each passing moment.

'The Air Mystic.'

No one knew better than him about how scary that person was.

'It.

'It came.

'It had braved that massive risk and came.

'Tonight, The Air Mystic was not supposed to appear here... it was not supposed to know about all this... '

"There must be a traitor!" Morris spat out fiercely.

"After going back, I will definitely squeeze Lance's lungs out! This stupid rat, how did he even gather his information!"

Layork lowered his head, making the smart move of now cursing another member of the six Powerhouses along with his boss, who was one of the six Powerhouses himself.

'But...

'It's the legendary Air Mystic.

'How is the boss going to defeat him?'

However, at that moment, Morris made a completely different decision.

Morris drew a deep breath and suddenly turned.

"Since the enemy is a Mystic...

"Let's retreat!"

As soon as he finished speaking, Layork and the others raised their heads in shock.

'Re-retreat?'

Morris said without a single doubt, "Our operation to secretly attack Red Street Market has completely failed."

'Completely failed?'

Layork could not believe his ears.

'Although there are unexpected circumstances...

'But.

'The battle had just begun?'

"You guys spread out and order all your subordinates to abandon their targets and

return to their original routes with full force!" Morris said fiercely.

"We are going back to Black Street!"

Layork looked at his determined boss with a dumbfounded expression.

'A few months of preparation...

'And we paid such a high price...

'Are we giving up just like this?

'Is the Air Mystic... '

Layork could not help but raise the question in his heart. 'Is the Air Mystic really this scary?'

.....

Jala looked at Thales as she slowly hid the expression on her face.

It was as though a long time has passed.

But Thales did not move and continued staring at her.

It remained that way until the latter sighed and gently lowered her head.

"Stupid little brat."

Jala's face was expressionless as she gazed at the gloomy cellar floor.

Thales did not even dare to breathe loudly.

But the young female bartender started to quietly speak, "You, you, has anyone ever told you that..."

Thales listened attentively.

"You are very mature for your age?"

It was Thales' turn to be stunned.

'Mature for my age?

'This...

'I need to quickly come out with something. How did the past transmigrators handle the local's suspicions?'

The young boy scratched his head and blushed. He spoke, embarrassed.

"Hehe, am I very mature for my age? Haha, about this, Jala, I know what you mean. However, I am enjoying my single life. Right now, I don't feel like..."

Ding!

Jala's expression immediately became warped. She fiercely jabbed her finger on Thales' forehead.

"Brat, watch what you say!

"Also, call me big sister Jala!"

Thales rubbed his forehead in pain. A memory appeared in front of his eyes.

It was a warm afternoon.

"Wu Qiren! It's not like DotA 2 can't operate without you! Have some self-control!"

"Why are you always saying the same thing lately?"

"Hey, that line's from an anime, of course I have to... Why are you signing up for the next tournament?"

"Well, my friend is asking me to join his team. It would be rude not to!"

"With your DotA skills? Pfft! You'd better have some self-control!"

"The same line again... Hey, give me my gaming mouse!"

Thales rubbed his head and buried the memory deep inside his head.

'What's going on lately? Why are there more and more flashbacks?

'It's a good thing that I can recover plenty of knowledge and wisdom that I only have from my past life...

'But the flashbacks can't always just happen during vital moments!'

He shook his head and looked at Jala, whose expression had changed.

He stated clearly and simply, "I'm not asking for much. We only need to cross Red Street Market to reach Blood Bottle Gang's territory. From then onwards, we'll take care of ourselves. No one will know about your involvement in this. You won't get into any trouble! It's before the rise of dawn now; the night is at its darkest. Hiding from the Brotherhood's informants from the XC District to Red Street Market shouldn't be a problem for you.

"I wouldn't dare say that the same would apply to other places. In fact, the moment we appear, we would be noticed by the Brotherhood, but Red Street Market is the border between the Brotherhood and Blood Bottle Gang. It is the only opportunity for us to escape! The Brotherhood will definitely spend time capturing the child beggars who have escaped everywhere. When they manage to react, it would be impossible for them to come for us in Red Street Market."

At this moment, Thales, who became confident and determined let out a slight smile.

"Ha..."

Jala sighed and closed her eyes.

"To head straight to Red Street Market when the other child beggars are escaping everywhere, it's not a bad plan. With my skills and experience, diverting the Brotherhood's informants is not impossible."

When she opened her eyes, her gaze suddenly became sharp and clear, stern and fearsome. It was as though she suddenly became a female assassin again.

Even Thales rarely saw Jala looking like this.

"But do you think you will be safe when you arrive in the Blood Bottle Gang's territory? This plan of yours can make Black Street Brotherhood be swathed by troubles, but it is only temporary.

"The Brotherhood is full of capable people and their fighting prowess is strong. Even their opponents, the Blood Bottle Gang, is inferior to them. It will only be a matter of time before they find the real culprit."

"And where can you go after that? As long as you are still in Eternal Star City, Black Street Brotherhood will eventually find you.

"Even if you leave Eternal Star City, how would you cope if the Brotherhood's influence out there turns out to be scarier or more rampant than within this city?"

It was as though Jala's words immediately struck Thales' weakness.

His face paled and his body swayed slightly.

True, he had not planned that far ahead yet. His capability was limited and his knowledge was lacking. What will come after they have reached Red Street Market, he could not say.

But they had no other choice, did they?

They can only go to Red Street Market.

"That would be our business," he said stubbornly after his thinking about it.

Jala, the assassin with a clever and fierce countenance, not the Jala who was previously an aloof and cold bartender, shook her head.

"But this is impossible..."

Seeing that Jala was still shaking her head, Thales became anxious.

To obtain Jala's help, he had used every method at his disposal...

He could not fail.

He glanced at the other children from the corner of his eye and clenched his fists

tighter.

'No!

'This is not a game of Football Manager!

'I cannot fail!'

Thales raised his head and spoke with difficulty, "I know that compared to providing us with food and giving me a dagger, this request is outrageous. But please look at those three children, all their hopes are set in this bar! Jala, please help me! Besides..."

Jala raised a brow.

The boy very reluctantly spoke the following words, because to him, that was obvious coercion and torture.

Thales took a deep breath. There was no other way. As a small fry, he could not begrudge the chance to let himself shine during the critical moments in a gang battle due to greed, avarice, and love for money!

"Besides, you owe me a favor, don't you?"

Thales said with a firm tone.

"Huh?"

Jala's gaze was full of doubt and shock, but she soon burst out laughing.

The bartender took out a Wolf Limb Blade from her thigh and placed it in front of Thales.

"Favor? Are you referring to the time you suggested that I modify my weapon this way? Alright, maybe I do owe you a favor. But isn't this a bit of an unfair deal?"

Thales looked at the Wolf Limb Blade.

He recalled the memory he shared with Jala.

It happened a long time ago.

"Jala, Jala, I thought of a way to compensate for your lack of strength and speed while attacking with the blade!"

"How many times do I have to remind you to call me big sister Jala? Go away. You're just a little brat who knows nothing about battles, has no psionic abilities nor divine arts, and knows nothing about mystic craft. Don't disturb me while I train."

"Jala, I'm talking about this! Look at this picture!"

"Eh! This design and curvature... Brat, where did you get this from? It looks quite interesting."

"This is called the khukuri! Whether you believe it or not, this weapon is from another world!"

"Pfft, khukuri? Even if I were to use it, I would need to give it a better, cooler name. Also, call me big sister Jala!"

"Besides, what other world are you talking about? Don't watch so many Dark Night Temple stage plays. The people there are all out of their minds!"

Having recalled this, Thales shook his head and tried to chase the memory away.

He spoke firmly, slowly enunciating each word.

"No, you don't owe me a favor for that. You owe it to me for... for agitating Quide to the point of lunacy. For causing widespread injury and death among the child beggars and leaving us no choice but to escape."

While speaking, Thales' tone was solemn.

As soon as he finished speaking...

Jala opened her eyes wide and looked at Thales in disbelief. Her beautiful lashes kept trembling.

"You, how did you..."

Thales originally had his doubts, but upon seeing Jala's expression, he was sure of his hypothesis.

"Yes."

Thales nodded his head. His heart felt a little heavy.

"You were the one who hurt Quide's hand earlier, right? He was cursing while calling out your name. Besides, Quide might have gotten furious when his biggest humiliation in life was mentioned; but mostly, he felt shame. How did he get so frenzied that he started killing child beggars? I don't know what happened, but I am certain that Quide was drinking in Sunset Pub and somehow angered you before this. After that, for some reason, he lost his sanity and came to the Abandoned Houses and slaughtered... slaughtered half the child beggars.

"This was what happened, was it not?"

"The death of half the child beggars was actually related to you."

At that moment, Thales definitely saw the quiver in Jala's eyes.

'This twice cursed, damned brat.'

Jala cursed inwardly, but the Wolf Limb Blade in her hand could not stop shaking, betraying her emotions.

'Way too clever.

'It was just a couple dozen child beggars... ' Jala's heart was trembling. 'It was not like I killed them. It has nothing to do with me.

'It's all Rick's fault, that damn accountant.

'It has nothing to do with me.

'Is it really?'

She suddenly saw an image of a baby covered in blood. The baby was wrapped in an expensive woolen blanket.

All at once, her heart felt so heavy that it was as though it could not pump any blood.

"That's why, please help the four child beggars left in front of you. Because this is- this

is a favor you owe us.

Although Thales felt extremely uncomfortable, he finished the sentence while his heart clenched in pain.

Jala tightly shut her eyes and returned the Wolf Limb Blade to her boot.

"Of course, if you think that you owe me a favor because I gave you the prototype for the Wolf Limb Blade, you can always include it on the list. I don't mind being owed more favors."

As though he found the atmosphere too stifling, Thales chuckled again.

But it was a very forced chuckle.

After a long while, Jala opened her eyes.

She raised her head gently.

"Thales, you are truly one special child. Always able to hit others right on their weaknesses. Quide probably died this way too, with one direct hit."

Her tone was quite feeble, making Thales' heart pound in fear.

But what she said next turned Thales stone cold.

"But it's useless..."

Jala paused slightly between each word. To Thales, every single pause felt like it would be fatal. "Even if I'm willing to help you and sacrifice my life to protect you guys, it will still impossible for you to cross Red Street Market. Because tonight, the Brotherhood will be launching a surprise attack on Red Street Market.

"It has already begun.

"Red Street Market will become the most horrifying battlefield in Eternal Star City tonight."

It was as though time had stopped for a while, and took forever to return to the present dimension.

"What did you say..." Thales asked, his trembling lips drained of all color.

"So, please give up. As you already know, Red Street Market has become a battlefield. It doesn't matter how strong I am, or if I possessed abilities such as 'The King's Wrath', It would be impossible for me to bring along four injured children through the battlefield of the two big gangs," Jala said faintly.

Thales stared at Jala in shock and looked at the other three children, who had almost finished their bread. Seeing that Thales was looking at them, Coria waved happily. It was easy for a four-year-old girl to forget pain and sadness.

"Don't worry," Sinti licked the bread crumbs on his hands and tapped Ryan, who was still fearful. "Thales will lead us in our escape."

"Yup, Thales is the smartest." Coria raised up a small piece of bread and happily continued, "He can do anything."

Ryan nodded with tears in his eyes, holding his severed hand.

On the other side of the cellar, in front of Jala, the boy whom the other child beggars had placed their hope and confidence in, buried his face in his hands in despair.

"Why is this happening... Why is the Brotherhood launching a secret attack on Red Street Market today... Why is it tonight... It shouldn't be so... An unforeseen circumstance, another unforeseen circumstance... It's impossible for us to go somewhere else... The Brotherhood has informants in every single place apart from Red Street Market and the western districts that follow... Unless we head straight for the first lower district and go towards the sewers from there. There's a shortcut there, but it's the Iron Bat Organization's territory..."

"That won't work, the Iron Bat Organization has long since submitted themselves to the Brotherhood... Go back to the Abandoned Houses and destroy all evidence of Quide's corpse? Impossible, the other children already know about it... We'll eventually be found out... What do I do now... What do I do now?!"

Thales' face was greenish, and his lips were pale. His forehead was drenched in cold sweat.

Jala could not bear to see that, but she could only shake her head and pat Thales' shoulder.

"You guys can stay here at my place." Jala sighed. "I know someone I can trust who can hide you guys for at least a month. But no matter what, since Quide is dead, the Brotherhood will definitely come looking for the culprit."

"I can go and find the old man." Jala paused for a while and said awkwardly, "The Brotherhood respects the old man a lot. You guys... you guys won't die at least."

'But dying is definitely better than living like that.' The hopeless Thales added inwardly.

'Sometimes,' Jala looked at Thales' desolate visage and mused about how even the clever boy had reached his wit's end, 'we have to submit to fate.'

Thales' vision blurred again.

"Qiren... Ha... she has already left. You, you have to accept it... sniff..."

"I... I'm okay, don't worry... Don't worry, aunty. I'm okay... really okay."

"I know, Qiren. Haha, sometimes, we have to accept fate. Since she has left, we will have to get over it. No one is spared from it, haha."

"Aunty... you... she..."

"Must accept fate... sniff... accept fate... sniff..."

'Accept fate.

'What is my fate?

'Reincarnate into this world and get slaughtered?

'And I have to submit to it?

'Hilarious.

'I have read so many books.

'Done so much research.

'And written so many papers.

'Why would I submit to fate?!'

Suddenly, Thales raised his head, greatly surprising Jala.

His gaze was full of resolution and anger.

"Brat, are you, are you okay?" Jala asked.

For some reason, right now, she was afraid of this seven-year-old boy.

"The Brotherhood will definitely search for the culprit, right?" Thales suddenly asked.

Jala narrowed her eyes. "Mm-hmm."

"They only need one murderer," Thales said plainly as if it was something insignificant.

Jala frowned.

'This brat... '

Thales took a deep breath and spoke slowly, "Let them stay with you here."

Jala was completely stunned.

"Let all three of them stay here. You need to stay, too, to protect them. Tell the Brotherhood that you managed to capture these three child beggars."

Thales spoke without emotion as if everything in front of him had lost their color.

"What?" Jala was a little surprised, but Thales ignored her.

"I will coordinate with these three children, about how I am- I am the 'only' murderer of Quide, and how the three children are only innocent child beggars who had escaped. I believe you will be able to shelter them well," Thales continued speaking stoically, placing emphasis on the word "only". "When the Brotherhood gets here, tell them... tell them to go find me."

"To find Quide's only murderer."

Silence.

An unbearable silence.

Until Jala raised her head in disbelief and looked at the slovenly child in front of her.

Jala clenched her teeth and frowned. "Then how about you? Do I surrender you to them?"

Thales shook his head.

"I will leave by myself."

Somehow, Jala had suddenly realized that the child had already made his decision.

And no one would be able to sway or break his resolve.

But she could not just let him walk towards his death like this.

After all...

"You won't even be able to leave the lower districts, brat," Jala said with a complicated look on her face, "from beggars to shopkeepers, and from thugs to stall-owners; their informants are everywhere—hidden but widespread.

"When morning comes, the people from the Brotherhood will capture you. At that time, you will only regret the fact that you didn't beg me to kill you right now."

Thales turned his head around. His gaze was terrifyingly cold.

"True," he said icily. Ever since he came to this place, he had stayed in the Brotherhood's base in the outskirts for a year, and in the lower districts for four years. He understood deeply the extent of the Brotherhood's powers and capabilities. "I probably won't be able to escape.

"But they will be able to live and not endure the pain left behind by Quide."

'No. Quide had already left them with scars that will be hard to forget for their entire lives.' He thought inwardly.

Jala extended her hands and placed them on Thales' shoulders while turning her head away.

Thales could feel the trembling hands that used to always be so steady and precise.

'No, there's still one more place that I can go.

'The only place possible.

'I knew that all along, didn't I?'

Thales burst out laughing.

'Fate is a funny thing.

'It's always playing tricks on you.

'You must try to go against it.'

He looked at the three children who had just finished eating their bread. They were looking at his direction with hope— they were not child beggars anymore.

Thales turned his head back and looked at Jala with a determined but calm gaze.

Looking at Jala, whose expression was gloomy and eyes red, Thales spoke, "It's already half-past four, and the sun will be out soon. Red Street Market is quite far away. Please tell me about the location of all the informants that I should pay attention to. I have to depart now to Red Street Market."

Chapter 9

Jala's Blade (One)

It was not difficult setting up a testimony with a few children. In their eyes, Thales was indeed the hero who had defeated Quide. Thales made up some excuse and lied that Jala would arrange everything. He also told them that no matter who was asking, they must insist that "Thales stabbed Quide's neck from the back".

That way, once the commotion was over, they would be safe.

"They can't catch me," Thales said with a smile.

Coria and Ryan, four and eight years old respectively, rarely had any doubts. In their eyes, Thales was capable of anything.

Only Sinti had slight doubts when Thales was leaving. However, Thales thought of various ways to ensure that he honored the pact where Thales did all the thinking, and Sinti's duty was only to carry them out.

'After that, we should head our own way- Ack, no- we should leave.'

As he waved nonchalantly to the children and stepped out of Sunset Pub's back door, Thales realized that there was a bit of grief and solemnity in his heart.

'I won't be able to take care of you guys anymore.'

'Hopefully, my luck is good, and we will meet again in the future.'

'What a solemn farewell.'

'After all, I did volunteer myself as a scapegoat... the wind is rustling a little- eh?'

Thales opened his eyes wide and watched as the expressionless Jala strode with her long legs and overtook him from the back, fully equipped.

"Hey, shouldn't you be staying in the pub to take care of the three of them? Without

you, they-"

"Don't worry, I hid them in a dark room and left a note for Edmund."

Jala, who wore a dark grey leotard, pulled a pair of transparent goggles from her forehead and wore them over her eyes. With an annoyed expression, she pressed on Thales' shoulder and kneeled down beside him.

"But-"

"Not buts, brat!" Jala interrupted, leaving no room for arguments.

"Since you have decided to handle the Roda family's wrath by yourself, and then go to Red Street Market to seek death while trying your luck, I should at least accompany you for a bit- because of this."

Jala tapped the Wolf Limb Blade in her boot.

"Also, the hidden sentries the Brotherhood placed in the XC District aren't what a seven-year-old brat can avoid. Even if I repeat every single detail about it a hundred times, you won't be able to make it through."

Thales stared stupidly at Jala and only spoke after a second.

"But there's a battle in Red Street-"

"Stop wasting time. Get on, we're leaving!"

Jala did not add any more superfluous words, nor did she bother to explain. Her haughty expression forced all of Thales' doubts back into the deep recesses of his mind.

But, to "get on"? Get onto what?

Thales looked at Jala, who was kneeling on one knee. Accentuated by her grey leotard, this short-haired big sister's sexy figure looked even better. Especially her breasts. Ahem. If he sat on her arms and held onto her neck, it will be like- Having thought that, Thales lowered his head in slight embarrassment and scratched his head.

Dong!

"Ah! Ouch!"

Jala fiercely jabbed the middle of Thales' forehead with her finger again, and she did it so hard that even Thales' view of the world was shaken.

As if she saw through Thales' thoughts, Jala fiercely pulled out half of her Wolf Limb Blade and shot him a "don't mess with me" glare through her goggles. She fiercely spoke, "You damn brat! Stop thinking about all that ridiculous stuff. Get onto my back, I will piggyback you!"

.....

The moon began sinking towards the west, but the sky had not brightened yet.

However, for Reidmore, this little bit of light was just as bright as daylight.

"Maintain your positions. Most of the elite fighters have gone to Red Street Market today. That's why the head is even stricter with us than usual because we are at the last fork before we reach Red Street Market."

'It's also the first corner the Brotherhood will pass by when they retreat,' Reidmore thought.

As a professional hidden sentry, Reidmore hid behind the corner of a dark alley. From this angle, he can clearly see the crossroad leading towards Red Street Market. However, due to the curfew, there was no one there tonight.

His partner, another member of the Brotherhood's hidden sentry, was behind him. Like him, he was vigilantly observing every single corner

"No problem, I'm in prime condition. Not a single blackfly would be able to fly over there, nor a single grey centipede would be able to crawl over here," his partner said with a punctuated tone.

"Very good. My 'period of alertness' is almost up. Later, I'll go handover directly and switch Nasri over. He should have been awake since an hour ago."

Reidmore nodded at his partner. He maintained his vigilance and observation as he left through the secluded entrance of the alley.

The moment he left, he was suddenly startled for a while.

Just now, he sensed something in that empty alley across the way.

No. Impossible. His ears, eyes, and nose had been trained by Sir Lance himself. He could recognize changes of color, refractions of light, and other psionic abilities. If there were intruders, as long as they did not have some rare fusion of psionic abilities—like those that could affect the mind—then they would definitely be unable to escape his sight and hearing.

But he still decided to go take a look.

Reidmore only eased his mind after a patrol of the area.

Perhaps his 'period of alertness' was over, and his mind was beginning to play tricks on him.

He shook his head and returned to work.

A woman with short hair and in a black leotard moved quietly from the area behind Reidmore's back. There was even a child clinging to her back.

She watched Reidmore's back, then lowered her body and tapped a toe on the ground before she jumped, quiet and fast, towards the exit of the alley, where it would lead them to Red Street Market.

Naturally, they were the female bartender, Jala, and the fleeing child beggar, Thales, who were heading towards Red Street Market.

"Before dawn breaks, while the night lingers, an ordinary person's defenses and mental strength would be at its most lax state. This is something that even a normal undergraduate from King's Establishment Military Academy would know."

For some unknown reason, Jala could still speak even though she was running.

Thales laid on Jala's back while the latter moved through the alley with an unprecedented speed. She moved like the wind, but no sound could be heard as her feet stepped on the ground.

The wind blew straight into his face and Thales could only keep his eyes shut tight as

he clung to Jala's neck. He pressed his head into the back of her neck, and Jala's fragrance wafted into his nose. He had absolutely no idea where he was.

But Jala's voice was still traveling into his ears clearly.

"That is why one of the six Powerhouses in the Brotherhood, The Sleepless Eye, Kobyrant Lance, who specializes in espionage, has trained a special hidden sentry unit—the 'Sleepless'.

"It's not that they don't sleep, it's just that their circadian rhythm is different from a normal person's.

"I don't know their exact numbers, but all of their circadian rhythms don't match. There are those who rest during the evening and wake at night. Then there are also those who rest during the morning and wake during sunset, and also those who rest at noon and wake in the morning. They have all sorts of circadian rhythms. That's why Lance's hidden sentry unit could work in shifts and he could ensure that all hidden sentries who report to duty would be at their most energized and most alert state. Lance calls this the 'period of alertness'.

"Lance has trained them to the extent that their senses, experiences, teamwork, and tracking skills are even better than an Alert Center's purebred Rudo Police Dog.

"They have one unit that is stationed in headquarters. If they encounter any important operations, they would blend into the crowd in the morning by disguising themselves. When it's nighttime, they would turn into hidden sentries and monitor all the critical entrances and exits in XC District.

"The two people we passed by just now should be the last two Sleepless patrollers before we enter Red Street Market."

Thales did not speak.

He was already shocked by Jala's stealth skills.

Reidmore was not the first Sleepless they slipped by.

Every single time Jala jumped to a Sleepless' patrol spot, she would shift from dashing swiftly to walking slowly. Thales was most awed by what was happening at the moment: Jala moved with an incredibly strange rhythm. She would follow behind a

Sleepless' and hide her body and shadow in the Sleepless' blind spot. Sometimes even in the blind spots of two Sleepless sentries, and these Sleepless would not even notice them.

What Thales did not know was that Jala was also very surprised by his performance, too.

Right from the start to the end, even if they were trailing behind a Sleepless, even despite the risk of being spotted if the sentry did turn his head around, Thales remained still—his heartbeat was calm, and even his breathing kept to a barely discernible level.

In regards to a seven-year-old boy's self-control, he was already behaving in a manner that was far too outstanding.

Of course, if Jala had not used her bizarre movements to mask Thales' breathing perfectly with the rhythm of her footsteps, his so-called 'indistinct' breathing would have been heard a long time ago.

But it was already impressive that he could do this.

'This child is definitely not an ordinary person. Is it a psionic ability or his blood? Or could it be it's because of both?

'He can't possibly be born with this talent, right?'

Thales' original plan was to have Jala lure away these patrols (It was the first time Thales heard about the Sleepless unit—his regard for the Brotherhood had been too shallow), and also risking herself to exposure. But now, it would seem that he had underestimated this female bartender. She was not just someone who was agile and skilled with the blade.

"We're here."

In a corner of the intersection, Thales slid gently down from Jala's back (reluctantly?).

Right before him was Red Street Market, enveloped with the night. His episode with the female noble in the velvet dress a few days ago still flashed vividly in his mind.

The area and size of Red Street Market was not smaller than Black Street, the name

exactly as implied. This was a famous place to find entertainment in the Western District.

In truth, there were quite a few nobles who would come here. They would either come in disguise or waltz in, looking to engage in relationships that surpassed friendships from adorable and dim young girls and boys, who might or might not be willing. These nobles range from first rank dukes to low class lords from villages—lords who were uncouth and whose mannerisms were too inappropriate for them to appear in public lest they make a fool of themselves. Needless to say, there was a tacit agreement that had existed for years between the nobles of Eternal Star City and the Blood Bottle Gang.

On this night, Black Street Brotherhood stretched their hands into this place.

But it was a pity because the hand that received them was a sinister trap.

"This doesn't look good," Jala whispered.

Even Thales could see it.

At the entrance to Red Street Market were corpses lying all over the ground. Some of them had their arms broken, heads cracked, bodies twisted, intestines ripped out, or the sternum bent outwards. Their blood dyed Red Street Market a deep red in the dark.

From a distance, there were at least thirty bodies lying on the ground.

Even Thales, who had just killed someone, could not help but suck in a deep breath when he saw the corpses littered all over the ground and in all the various ways they died. He tried as hard as possible not to think about it.

Faint sounds of battle echoed in the distance.

Jala calmly stretched out her hand and pressed down on Thales' shoulder until he was squatting down.

"The last time I killed someone, I seemed to have run into you as well," Jala said with a little cheerless tone.

Thales could not see her gaze behind the protective goggles, but he suddenly felt that

Jala had become more serious.

"Brat, from now on, you owe me a favor."

Thales was stunned, then he saw Jala touch the blades on her boots.

Then, the female bartender used an incredibly faint voice, like a mosquito, and left strict orders to Thales.

"Don't speak, don't move. There's a real elite up ahead. He's not of the Sleepless sentries."

Thales' hairs rose, he did not even dare breathe too deeply and felt frustrated. He had wanted to enter Red Street Market alone during all that chaos and escape from the Brotherhood, but this was just the first station, and if there was already... Ah, he was still too naïve.

In the next second, Jala suddenly took out a thick black cloth from the left side of her abdomen and pressed it gently over Thales' mouth and nose.

"Use this to breathe and muffle your voice."

Jala did not say more, with those protective goggles on, her expression was indiscernible. She slowly drew the blade from her leg.

Thales pressed the black cloth over his mouth and nose. This was a good item; he had no respiratory difficulties from breathing under the black cloth, and the sound of his breaths was also masked.

If this was in a game, it would definitely be a class-level equipment that gave "Stealth +20"!

Thales automatically ignored Jala's faint fragrance from the cloth.

But the next moment, he could not allow himself to relax anymore.

"I found him." He heard Jala say.

Then, she shot up like a bolt of lightning. With one stomp on the wall beside her, she pounced on the corpses at the fork like an arrow fired from a bow!

The only thing that was faster than Jala was the Wolf Limb Blade she threw.

At that moment, as he breathed through the black cloth, Thales noticed one of the thirty-something corpses—with its intestines spilling out of its body, and some of those intestines were even separated from its body—to his shock, the corpse moved.

Ting!

A freezing ray of light suddenly shot out from behind the corpse and knocked that Wolf Limb Blade off its trajectory!

But the second Wolf Limb Blade was already in its master's hand, and it charged forward with Jala as she approached the corpse rapidly.

With her right hand holding onto the blade in a reverse grip, she instantly cut at the corpse!

Sha! Dang!

Thales recognized that sound. That was the sound of metal piercing into flesh.

But before he even had time to register what was happening, his vision blurred and he saw a person staggering out from behind the corpse before he lunged forward. Immediately after, a rapier fell to the ground with a clatter.

Jala had already landed on the ground nimbly. She was positioned in a half squat, with her left hand planted on the ground. The blade in her right hand was covered in blood.

That person who lunged out from behind the corpse swayed before he fell to the ground.

He did not move.

The female bartender picked up the Wolf Limb Blade she had thrown with a backhand grip and stood up quietly.

It was just a few short seconds. Thales felt his jaw fall slack as he watched.

He knew that Jala was very strong.

Except for the dog-slaughtering incident all those years ago, he only now truly came to understand just how powerful the female bartender was after seeing how she had swiftly ambushed and killed today.

But Thales still did not make a sound, nor move a muscle.

He had a faint feeling that Jala had just become much more solemn.

"What an eye-opener. Among the ordinary class, you must be considered an outstanding assassin."

As the sounds rang in the air, a tall, bald, and fierce man walked over from afar, carrying an exaggerated spiked penta-mace over his shoulder. He did not even spare a glance at his deceased comrade—he only glared at the female bartender standing in the middle of the corpses.

"You know that your Brotherhood is over, right? Everyone's in the trap, all your forces are wiped out. You won't be able to predict just how terrifying the people we've sent tonight are."

The fierce, bald man let out a snort, "Our task is vigilance or stopping all possible reinforcements from the Brotherhood, but I didn't expect that the formidable Black Street Brotherhood would send over a little girl playing with knives."

The large, bald man walked into the light of the setting sun.

Thales could see his face clearly. The man was missing half his nose. His nostrils were flipped outwards in a terrifying manner, and he looked like a skeleton.

Thales suddenly recognized who he was.

He was the bald Sven.

Blood Bottle Gang's leader in illegal businesses.

One of the famous Strongest Twelve in the Blood Bottle Gang.

Chapter 10

Jala's Blade (Two)

Twelve years ago, when the kingdom was in chaos and blood covered the lands, that terrifying swordsman, wielding his blade without emotions or principles, sliced out his own territory in Bgenelack Street. The newly born Black Street Brotherhood and the capital's well-established Blood Bottle Gang were like two evil dragons that would not rest until they died. For the hegemony of Eternal Star City and Constellation's underworld, they started fighting in a battle to the death.

As time passed, Black Street Brotherhood grew up gradually from an infant dragon into a fierce, gigantic one that had sharp fangs and claws, especially during the recent years. They were on equal footing with the Blood Bottle Gang, who originally had the upper hand.

From thence, during the fight that lasted ten years, the two gangs had gathered together a group of terrifying people outside of the kingdom's gaze and stirred up a great surge formed by blood in the underworld.

During this battle, a dozen or so powerful fighters from the Black Street Brotherhood and another dozen skilled fighters from the Blood Bottle Gang became the people standing at the frontlines of the battle, representing the group of young men that possessed the greatest hope for their future and the younger generation that possessed the greatest promise.

Compared to their seniors—the three mysterious legendary Assassins along with the six Powerhouses, who rarely attacked from the Brotherhood, the two terrifying Mystics, together with the eight strange Psionic Warriors in the Blood Bottle Gang, the names of these powerful youngsters were much greater, even the child beggars were familiar with them.

The bald Sven was the most mysterious of the Strongest Twelve in Blood Bottle Gang, a name given to them by gossipers to name the twelve young aces since there was only twelve among the new generation now. He was in charge of collecting the illegal accounts in Blood Bottle Gang. He rarely showed his face during large-scale fights, that was why no one talked about how great his fighting prowess and skills were. However,

he had not stumbled in the five years of harsh and bloody fights between the gangs. Simultaneously, most of those who had been his enemy are now skeletons, and they were all once elite fighters of outstanding abilities in the Brotherhood.

Jala did not say anything, she merely exercised her wrist slightly.

"Dorno is an idiot. His idea of using corpses to lay an ambush is also despicable, but I still have to be grateful for his death, or else I wouldn't have known that we would have an important guest who came here quietly, and uninvited."

Sven gave an ugly smile, brought down that terrifying spiked penta-mace from his shoulders, then started swinging it back and forth with his hands while looking as if he was not exerting any effort in doing so.

Jala suddenly disappeared from her spot.

The bald Sven smiled without a care, then turned around and swung his arm fiercely!

Cling! Clang!

The spiked penta-mace, twice the size of a normal person's arm, crashed into two Wolf Limb Blades causing Jala, who had suddenly laid an ambush by rushing to his lower left side, to lose her balance before she was sent flying backward!

Thales' heart clenched!

Fortunately, Jala gained her balance mid-air and performed a beautiful backflip before she landed on the ground.

The bald Sven gritted his teeth and swung his weapon as if he was swinging a baseball bat from Thales' previous world.

'What terrifying strength.' Thales was suddenly slightly curious. If he just had enormous strength, then why was it that Sven was rumored to be so mysterious?

"What fearsome speed, but if I knew about your existence, I can just rely on my instincts in battle, and blocking you isn't really that difficult."

Sven's hideous nose looked terrifying as it trembled due to his laughter.

Jala did not speak. She only disappeared from her spot again. In the next moment, she appeared before Sven's left leg with her body bent.

Both blades were brought out.

But Sven only made a light tap with his foot and moved his body sideways before he acted on habit and brought his mace crashing down again!

Bang!

The spiked mace crashed into the stone pavement and debris flew in all directions!

Jala rolled out of the dangerous spot and avoided that fatal strike.

"So there is a blade that's created in such a curved manner? It's an uncommon weapon, that's for sure. Come, lassy. It doesn't matter whether you are a killer or an assassin, that ambush you are so proud of is useless against an enemy who is prepared."

Jala crouched down on the ground as if she was thinking of a strategy.

"What would you do? You wouldn't be thinking of charging forward, right?"

"After all, this is the only way for you to enter Red Street Market."

Sven continued using words to interrupt Jala's thoughts.

Thales grew even more nervous in his heart. He knew that Jala was currently his only hope in getting through Red Street Market and escaping from the Brotherhood, but he was even more concerned about Jala's safety.

He was also worried about Sven's mysterious reputation.

Jala's expression was hidden behind her protective goggles, but she seemed to have come to some sort of conclusion as she stood up slowly from the ground.

'It has been many years.' Jala laughed bitterly at the bottom of her heart. 'Do I still have to use this skill?'

Thales swallowed nervously. He had borne witness to Jala's agile, phantom-like movements and her terrifying speed, but would her Wolf Limb Blade be effective

against the bald Sven, who had clearly had grown perceptibly in terms of physical strength.

Within the next moment, Jala flipped the Wolf Limb Blades in her hands at the same time and made it so that she was holding the blades in a forehand grip.

And then.

Jala no longer disappeared.

She charged straight towards Sven.

Thales almost cried out.

One of the blades was positioned in front and the other right behind. The one in front went straight for Sven's throat, and the blade at the back seemed directed to the spiked mace.

"Frontal assault? You're just asking for death!" Sven shouted in excitement and swung the mace towards Jala!

Hu!

The spiked mace carried the sound of wind and went charging towards Jala's waist as she continued dashing forward!

'Later, I'm going to enjoy myself with this pretty wench... Hmm?'

Sven noticed to his surprise that this time, Jala did not block nor did she retreat!

At the moment the mace arrived right before her body, she stretched out her flexible body at an impossible angle!

While facing the spiked mace before her, Jala did a forward somersault that made Thales so shocked that his jaw fell slack and marginally avoided that incoming spiked mace!

Even Sven was shocked.

'This movement... How did she do it?'

Her attack had not ended.

The female bartender pressed the blade positioned behind the other on the spiked mace and, using Sven's huge strength, jumped onto the bald man's left shoulder!

Then, she swung the blade positioned in front downwards swiftly!

The modified curved edge of the blade allowed the Wolf Limb Blade to cut towards the left side of Sven's neck with faster, stronger, and even fatally than a normal blade.

Rip!

Sven roared as he retreated. During that critical moment, he managed to avoid getting a mortal blow. However, blood still gushed out from his left shoulder.

'This woman... has she completely given up on defense and is using risky evasions for frontal assaults?

'Doesn't she know that if she makes even a single mistake, she'll die?'

But Jala did not relent in her attacks. With a single tap of her foot, she continued her assault!

Right before their eyes, she turned her body in the air and dodged the tip of Sven's mace with just a few millimeters between them.

The Wolf Limb Blades in her hands followed their master and sliced towards Sven as they spun.

Blood light shone in the air once again, and this time, Jala had cut open the right side of the bald man's ribs!

Then she struck again!

When she attacked head-on, she perfectly displayed her agility and flexibility. As she faced Sven's terrifying attacks, she would move and dodge every single time the mace almost struck her. There were several times where Thales even saw the tip of her nose almost grazing the rusted spikes on the mace.

At the same time, the rhythm to Jala's attack and her speed did not slow down even a

single bit. In fact, she was even deadlier than when she was trying to ambush Sven.

On the other hand, while Sven roared furiously with an intimidating presence, she continued attacking tirelessly and exposing herself to extreme danger. Even Thales could tell that Sven was continuously injured, and blood continued pouring out of his wounds. He was already having trouble coping with the situation and was struggling.

'I can't continue like this!' Sven thought in panic. 'How could she not make a mistake while dodging minimally?'

Clang!

Sven roared and used all his strength to block the attack. With a disheveled side roll, he dodged it and rapidly widened the distance between them. Now, imagine a big man built like a bear being forced to roll on the ground by a slender girl only two thirds his size.

"This... This is Swift Killing Blade!"

This sentence was like a stone that struck the surface of the water and interrupted Jala's continuous onslaught, causing her to stop moving.

"The skills you used to kill Dorno previously should be the Assassination Blade and the Instant Kill Blade!"

Sven panted harshly with fear rife on his face as he shouted in disbelief, "I've only ever seen the Blood Chant Lordan Charleton use this Swift Killing Blade before! You... You are a member of the Charleton Family, who are known as the Assassin's Flower!"

Jala was kneeling on one knee, not saying a single word. This seemed to be the posture she favored to gain leverage. At that moment, she was only looking at that big man coldly.

"This is impossible!" Sven seemed to have experienced some sort of blow. His face was pale and his lips were quivering. "The members of the Charleton Family have already fled Constellation and disappeared into another country when Kessel the Fifth inherited the throne! Why would one of them appear here and side with the Brotherhood?!"

In his disbelief, he continued, "The order of arrest and rewards have spread

throughout the entire western continent! With the crime of killing a member of the royal family on your backs, how dare you still come to Eternal Star City?! Aren't you afraid of being surrounded by the army and the Royal Guards?!

"It doesn't matter how strong the Charleton Family or Black Street Brotherhood are. Did you think they would be able to bear the wrath of 'Iron Fist King' and all of Constellation?"

However, the bald Sven's angry words immediately turned gentle within the next second.

"If I die here, your identity will definitely be exposed! The Kingdom's Secret Intelligence Department will receive news about the return of the family that killed our king to Constellation tomorrow morning!

"Kessel the Fifth will definitely not let you go! He will get rid of every single descendant and blood kin of the Charleton Family!

"You can let me go," he whispered softly, and his voice had gained a pleading edge. "I don't care about the Blood Bottle Gang's mission any more. Just go, as long as you spare me, I promise you that tomorrow... No, I will leave Constellation tonight itself!

"I won't tell anyone your secret either! I know about your capabilities!

"I don't want to provoke the Charleton Family!"

But in the next instant, Jala once again pressed forward and arrived before him!

Cling... Ching!

This time, Sven blocked the first strike, but that sword seemed to possess life and changed its direction in a bizarre fashion. Once it struck his mace, it moved around it without using even a single ounce of strength!

Jala's head and chest also spun and changed directions, just like a lithe ribbon, and she moved around the spiked mace before her.

'Like a human body driven by the current,' Thales thought in his heart.

'What's going on?' Sven thought in shock. 'Why can't I block this blade's trajectory?'

The blade in the female bartender's right hand did not stop. Once it changed direction, it returned to its original trajectory once again and headed for Sven's throat with even more lethality!

Until it cut into his throat.

Blood poured onto the ground.

Sven watched Jala wiping off the blood on her blades on his clothes while completely uninjured herself before she quietly tucked away her blades.

The spiked mace from the bald Sven's hand fell gently on the ground.

"What is this... sword technique...?"

Sven struggled, wanting to finish that sentence before his body fell to the ground.

But Sven had no energy to finish the sentence.

During that instant, Thales seemed to have returned to four years ago. The unconcerned woman before him in the garbage dumps behind Sunset Pub had been swinging the blades in her hands and asking him a question while he stared in shock.

"Using Ceaseless Killing Blade to slaughter a dog is a waste. Hey, brat, do you want to eat dog meat? If you call me big sister, I'll let you eat dog meat!"

Ceaseless Killing Blade. Thales knew that this was Ceaseless Killing Blade.

The last being to have suffered this sword technique had been a huge Angry Wolfhound that had run into some conflict with Thales ("We were just having an intense debate of whether humans should be added to the Angry Wolfhounds' list of consumable things. I'm very grateful for you supporting my opinion, big sister. So, dog meat?"-Thales).

Jala's skills shocked him once again.

However, what sent Thales into an even greater state of shock was the truth about the Assassin's Flower, the Charleton Family, which the bald Sven had spoken about.

They killed a member of the royal family?

Assassin's Flower?

The family that killed... killed the king?

"He talks too much."

Jala stated coldly as looked at Sven's corpse.

"So much for the so-called Strongest Twelve."

Once she finished speaking, she called out to Thales, who was hiding in the dark.

"Let's go, brat."

Thales moved past the bald Sven's corpse and looked at his eyes, which were left open in his death. Even up to now, he still did not understand how Sven, who was only physically strong, big, and was missing a nose, could be the most mysterious existence in the Strongest Twelve.

Was it because Jala was too strong?

He shook his head and walked towards Jala.

The two of them continued towards the battlefield between the Blood Bottle Gang and the Brotherhood.

He sneaked a glance at the side of the female bartender's face, and Thales decided very intelligently not to ask her about the Charleton Family.

'Well, I also have my secrets,' The boy thought.

'And my secret is bigger than yours.'

.....

At the same time, in Sunset Temple's inner altar.

A middle-aged noble with grayish white hair was waiting while he sat on a stone chair in the lower section of the inner altar. He seemed calm, but was in truth, scared in his heart.

His gaze never left a small offering lamp that was burning continuously on the altar.

It was as if he was afraid that there would be a sudden change to the flames in the lamp.

There was an elderly priest completely devoted to prayer beside him. He was quiet and pious.

This made the middle-aged noble remember Yodel. He was a terrifying man who was as quiet as this priest was. In fact, he was overly quiet.

Even His Majesty was confident of Yodel and believed that he would never hesitate when he made a move.

However, that man, who always hid behind that Purple Drop Crystal mask, had worked with him once when he was younger, and it was not a happy memory.

He should have long since found his target with his efficiency.

That man was someone who had his own creed.

After all, while he had served under His Majesty's will, that Yodel Cato, that mysterious man, was only serving under His Majesty for the benefit of the king.

It was the difference between the sky and the earth.

Yodel... did he really know or understand when His Majesty hoped he would attack?

.....

Before long.

The bald Sven's corpse suddenly twitched.

Then, the area around his neck, as well as the wounds around it, started rapidly recovering.

It continued until the man got up on his feet with much difficulty.

"Damn it!"

Sven cursed and touched his spiked mace.

"A member of the Charleton Family has appeared in Eternal Star City. This news alone can get me ten gold coins from the Town Hall, but..."

Sven touched the wound on his neck that just healed.

His life was more important.

Fortunately, that woman was in a hurry and did not bother to turn back and check.

There was naturally no need to go into detail about his battle prowess and skills, it was one of the reasons why Sven was one of the Strongest Twelve in Blood Bottle Gang, but more importantly, he had a self-healing ability that no one knew about. It usually helped him turn the tables against his enemy at the instant they relaxed their guard and allowed him to win.

"As long as your head... well, more accurately speaking, as long as your brain isn't damaged, then you can return from the dead." These were the words spoken to Sven by the true Powerhouse within the Blood Bottle Gang—the Blood Mystic.

"Congratulations, Undead Sven."

'There's that boy, too,' The Undead Sven thought. When he was in that state of fake death, he saw a thin and frail boy appear from the corner of the street and walk away with that woman from the Charleton Family.

This was also something strange. A child that could follow a woman from the Charleton Family was definitely not an ordinary child.

Was he some sort of genius? Did he have an ability that could turn the tides of battle?

Was he some sort of biological weapon? Could he attack and kill in large areas?

Was he some sort of immortal non-human specimen? The boy looked young, but could he actually already be hundreds of years old, and maybe near a thousand years old?

Sven hefted the spiked mace onto his shoulders and frowned.

'Once I send the news to the Air Mystic, I'll... '

But his thoughts were interrupted.

By a strange person in a strange mask who suddenly appeared before him.

His apparition before Sven was unexpected.

"You saw that boy," The strange masked person said. His hoarse voice made it difficult to discern who he was, and the words he said was not a question, but a statement.

'Who is he?'

He did not even notice.

He hid his tracks, could he also be from the Charleton Family?

That strange mask seemed to be made from a dark purplish hard metal. The edges were clear and there were two holes drilled into the spot where the eyes should be. It was covered by a circular lens made from crystal drops, and there also seemed to be a yellow-bronze machine set up behind the lens.

The reason why Sven could think so much was simply because he had nothing else to do.

That person with the dark purple mask was holding onto a short sword where the part connecting to the hilt was crafted in a criss-cross manner.

Under its master's control, this short sword reopened the wound that had just healed on Sven's neck.

The instinct to dodge did not even register in Sven's head before his throat was slit open.

Twang!

Sven fell down once again with his spiked mace.

'How unfortunate.' Sven thought, fully prepared to welcome his next death and subsequent resurrection.

However, in his state of pseudo-death, Sven discovered to his shock that the masked

person did not leave.

That strange masked person had a barely noticeable crease between his brows behind the mask.

He slowly crouched down and stared at Sven's wound intently.

After a moment, the strange masked person nodded, as he had understood something.

In Sven's perceptions, he discovered to his despair that the masked man was brandishing the sword short in his right hand lightly to make a beautiful sword stroke.

No.

No!

Sven roared fearfully in his heart!

Then, Sven "watched" the strange person plunge that short sword lithely through his temple and straight into his brain with one fatal strike.

He pulled the sword out.

There was not even a drop of blood on the smooth surface of the blade.

"Only the head... More accurately speaking, as long as the brain isn't damaged, you can return from death..."

In his daze, Sven seemed to hear the Blood Mystic's words again.

From then on, the bald Sven, one of the Strongest Twelve in Blood Bottle Gang, the man who was known as the Undead Sven among the inner circle of the Blood Bottle Gang, did not wake again.

The strange masked person crouched down and swept his right hand through a sword mark on the ground.

It was a mark left behind by Wolf Limb Blade when it stabbed the ground.

He stood up.

And then he vanished.

Just like a ghost.

Chapter 11

The Mystic

There was a clear and melodious crash.

The glass on the door was smashed by the figure.

Lilian, dressed in a thin, silk pajamas, lifted the candlestick in surprise as she looked at the figure that fell in from outside. It was a handsome man with short, blonde hair. He was wearing a sky blue color... 'Is he wearing a police uniform?'

'The police...' Lilian looked at the clock. 'The police came at four fifty in the morning by breaking through the window of the third floor of a private residence?'

It would not be fair to call it a private residence. After all, the Laya Club was one of the very best 'clubs' in Red Street Market. It was located between the Red Street Market and popular areas of Linhe Street (a famous business street in the Western District.). Lilian was a famous beauty in the club. Even nobles at the rank of an Earl or a high official of the court would need to pay Lilian twenty gold coins an hour for her to entertain them.

That was why, when the young and promising Captain Kohen Karabeyan crashed the private bedroom in Laya Club from the third floor, Lilian woke up with a fright and came to investigate with a candlestick.

"Young Miss, I apologize for disturbing your sleep."

Kohen got up awkwardly from the ground. He held his saber behind him and bowed to the astonished Lilian. When he wanted to take off his hat to bow, he found that his officer hat had dropped in the battle earlier.

"Shit," Kohen mumbled.

'That queer old man threw away my nightgown. I can't even go out to buy them in the middle of the night.'

Lilian boldly looked at the polite and handsome (this is very important, otherwise Lilian would have already smashed him with the candlestick) police officer. Her big beautiful eyes lowered. She stretched out her hand to tease her beautiful soft hair, her fingers seemed to slide past her proud chest. She then laughed. "Dear police officer, we are not open tonight."

Kohen knew what this place was naturally. On regular days, the Laya Club would be lively during these hours. However, Kohen simply smiled at the beauty and was not moved by Lilian's seductive mien.

"In other words, you have received a prior warning, and hence the shop is closed tonight?"

"Of course. The Blood Bottle Gang had bribed the officers and also promised to make up for the loss of business. Otherwise... do you know our hard-working and stressed bosses would suffer huge losses when Red Street Market has to close for a night. What would happen to the ten million people in Constellation if they were too tired, exhausted, or spiritually spent to contribute to the second largest power in the western part of the continent?"

Lilian blinked and smiled cunningly.

Kohen's brows tightened as he looked at the mature and seductive beauty.

'Looks like the intelligence obtained from the informant was not complete. At first, it was thought that the Black Street Brotherhood is launching a surprise attack on the Blood Bottle Gang's Red Street Market section. Now, it seems like the Blood Bottle Gang has a trap set up in Red Street Market in an earlier countermeasure.'

'I came here tonight to probe the main clashing point of the two big gangs. The Brotherhood had moved out. After all, we are talking about the Blood Bottle Gang which is almost a hundred years old.'

"Hey. That blond officer!" A female voice outside the building interrupted the conversation.

"Come down quickly to meet your death! According to the rules, you are not supposed to enter any houses!"

Lilian curiously walked to the broken window. She saw a woman in leather armor,

carrying a whip and covered in blood. She looked up the building angrily.

Kohen bowed to Lilian. "Thank you for your notification, beautiful lady, please excuse me. I must go and attend an appointment with another lady."

The blond captain of the police turned around and gently leaped to the street below.

"Dearest Miss Vynis, don't be so impatient."

Kohen's smile then suddenly turned cold and killing intent appeared in his eyes.

"By order of the King, in the name of the Holy Constellation Constitution, as a Class Two police officer, I have the authority to immediately kill suspects that may endanger the interest of the kingdom and the life of the citizens. Do not worry, I will send you to reunite with your brother."

Upstairs, Lilian covered her mouth. She could recognize that this person was one of Blood Bottle Gang's Strongest Twelve. She was the younger sister of the notorious Leighton Siblings, 'Scorpion Whip' Vynis Leighton.

Her brother, 'Venomous Sting' Primo Leighton, came to the Laya Club the previous day. He loved peculiar things and had almost used the oil from the Everlasting Lamp to scald a new girl to death.

Based on the officer's words, he had already killed the Venomous Sting.

"Blue-skinned dog! Even your superior doesn't dare to not give face to the Blood Bottle Gang! You... How dare you!" Vynis shouted indignantly. As one of the Strongest Twelve's more unconventional people, she had shaved her hair on the left side and combed down the hair on the right side. This made her look more hale and hearty.

"I will whip you until all the flesh on your body turns into mash!"

After saying that, her whip flicked in a circle and towards Kohen. The barbs on the whip were like living creatures, flying out and attacking in unison!

"So it was like this!"

Kohen's figure suddenly became indistinguishable. Only a veteran would be able to see him; an ordinary person cannot see the speed of his movements as he rapidly

changed positions.

Ding! Ding ding!

The unreal image of the saber flashed and cut off the barbs of the whip.

"If your brother was still alive, with his ability to control the whip, the both of you may even cause trouble if you were to work together."

Vynis' whip was agile like a snake. The whip barbs and tip formed an all-out attack leaving no quarters uncovered.

"If I was ten seconds earlier, Primo would not have died." Vynis was full of hatred.

"A blue-skinned dog like you would have been shredded to pieces by us!"

Kohen's expression did not change. With lightning speed, he cut at the five whiplashes trained on him but they have already reached the front of his eyes.

At this moment, Kohen suddenly gave a solemn look. He rushed forward without bothering to look at the lashes approaching him.

"Suicidal idiot!"

Rip!

Vynis grinned hideously as she watched Kohen rush towards her. The whip ruthlessly tore his right shoulder. At the same time, another three more barbs lashed out.

"The barbs on my whips are laced with a poison that magnifies pain. There are sharp points in the barbs. Once hit, the pain would... Eh?"

Kohen made a move that was beyond Vynis' expectations. The police figure had rushed forward to meet the three barbs and raised his bare left hand to block the attack. The whip cut deeply into the man's arm and even pierced his palm. However, his expression did not change as though he had simply been bitten by an ant.

Vynis was shocked as she watched Kohen. Many of her enemies' faces distorted from the pain that came with the poison. Their movements would become contorted and they would wail mournfully as they rolled at her feet.

'But why does he not even show any reaction? Does he not have a sense of pain?'

"Let us end the street performance here," Kohen said coldly.

Vynis was shocked at Kohen who charged at her like a thunderbolt and quickly reacted. She hurriedly flicked her whip to create a defense in front of herself.

But an abundant force instantly broke out from Kohen's sword!

Vynis' expression instantly changed.

'This is... No!'

Suddenly, Kohen's saber seemed to sharpen unceasingly, twinkling like starlight, and the whip that was coming at him was cut into innumerable pieces.

In Vynis' eyes, Kohen's callous face and his sword seemed to grow bigger and bigger.

The next moment, the sharp but simple saber pierced through the left side of her chest. Its sharp end exiting from her back.

At this point, she struggled to speak.

"Power of Eradication. You are an Erad..." But she could not finish.

"The enforcement of the law is completed."

Kohen gently pushed the astonished looking Vynis away from his sword as though he was doing something insignificant.

"Let me give you a suggestion. Next time, if you have any trump cards on hand to play, use them all from the start."

He gently took out the barbs from his hand. An abundant force once again filled his hand, forcing out a few drops of blue-green liquid.

"If I was wearing armor, even if it was light armor, you would have already died a thousand times."

"In the eyes of those who have experienced warfare, even the strongest in the ranks of

the supra class are childish like street fights. As for you, it is practically a kid's game to us."

Vynis closed her lifeless eyes and laid on the ground forever. Not too far away was her brother, leaning against the wall with a sword stuck in his throat.

Kohen bowed to the astonished Lilian upstairs. He then went deeper into the Red Street Market.

'This man seems polite.' Lilian held her mouth as she thought, 'But he does not show mercy to women.'

.....

At another lane in Red Street Market.

Jala indifferently gripped the Wolf Limb Blade and pulled it out of the abdomen of the last red-scarfed thug. She disgustedly flicked the blade to get rid of the fresh blood.

Thales tried to convince himself not to think of Jala's slaughtering which reminded him of Quide, who died with his eyes wide open.

'They were all aware. When they joined the gang, they all had a clear idea of the consequences.'

Thinking like this, his mood improved.

Thales tightly covered his mouth and nose with the black cloth and watched Jala slaughter a small group of about seven or eight thugs. He then tacitly and skillfully came out from the hiding place and climbed onto Jala's back.

"How did you overcome it?"

"Hm?"

"The nausea and guilt of killing."

Jala sighed.

"I was taught from an early age," she replied as her feet moved lightly as she carried

Thales on her back. Her tone was cold. "The ones I killed were not of the same kind as me. It was like stepping on an ant."

Thales no longer spoke and tightly hugged Jala's neck.

After they passed Sven in Red Street Market, everywhere was covered with the crippled and the dead, and the echoes of clashing swords and blades. The sound of duels heard from a few places even made Jala's scalp feel numb. Although the two were careful, even with Jala's skills in concealment, it was quite challenging in the chaos.

There were corpses everywhere, and the sounds of melee combat filled the air. They tried very hard to conceal themselves but inevitably ran into two groups of thugs—one from the Blood Bottle Gang while the other from the Brotherhood.

Jala mercilessly went all out and left no survivors. She then left quickly.

For some reason, Thales got accustomed to this kind of gruesome scene.

'This is not a good thing,' he reminded himself. Becoming psychologically insensitive would inevitably lead to deviated behavior.

"This is the fifth intersection and we still cannot get through." Jala stopped and frowned. She then felt the air in front.

Thales came down and also felt the wind ahead. It seemed empty but to the outstretched hand, there was an invisible and solid barrier.

"Is this a Psionic skill?" Thales asked in surprise.

So far, Thales had seen some but not a lot of Psionic abilities. For example, in the Brotherhood, Morris who was responsible for human trafficking was one of them. He once just looked at a runaway beggar and the beggar choked to death.

"No. Psionics don't have such powerful abilities. It is powerful enough to simultaneously cover five intersections at this wide street. I suspect the others would be the same. This is something difficult to achieve for a Psionic."

Jala pushed up her goggles and carefully 'examined' the protective barrier.

She recalled the old man and that man. When she thought about it, she could not help

but pause for a while, telling herself about those frightening legends.

"As far as I know," the bartender sounded solemn, "this is very likely done by a Mystic."

Thales' eyes grew wide.

'A Mystic.'

In fact, during the four to five years of his career in the streets, he had heard this word more than once from the drinkers of Sunset Pub, the patrons of the brothel at Red Street Market, gamblers of the Black Gold Casino, and the thugs of the Brotherhood.

Thales initially thought that they were similar to the 'magicians' and 'wizards' in the fantasy novels in his flashbacks. However, he later found out that this was not the case.

No one would provide complimentary general knowledge to lowly beggars like Thales. Even if there were, what he could obtain would just be some village gossip, or dumb rumors and horror stories.

However, relying on his previous life's specialized field survey experience, Thales managed to learn some general knowledge through observation, and he had made some related to the Mystics.

1) Those that spoke of the Mystics spoke with negative emotions such as fear, hatred, and curses. At the same time the keywords used were 'formidable', 'terrifying', 'hell', 'illegal', 'condemned', and so on.

2) In this world, the Mystics were rare (The 'rare' here was not as rare as the ones in the YY novels[1] of his past life). Thales had determined that among the countless people that spoke of Mystics in the past five years, only a bar customer and a brothel patron told a probable story. Evidently, they had either direct or indirect contact with information regarding the Mystics.

3) He had never heard of any Mystic organization, powers, or gatherings. Nevertheless, there were rumors on the streets that among the leaders of the Blood Bottle Gang, there were two Mystics.

4) The patrols responsible for the Western City Gate were equipped with 'anti-Mystic equipment'.

5) Mystics were completely different from the ones people took delight in discussing such as 'Psionics', 'Psionic Warriors', 'Swordsmen of Eradication' and 'Knights of Eradication'. The latter could be obtained through innate talent, or through training. However, Thales had never heard of how Mystics obtained their terrifying powers.

6) Other than Mystics, there was also a weapon with the suspicious name, 'Mystic Gun'. This weapon was only allowed to be used in the Royal Army. Anyone caught illegally possessing it would be convicted of a felony.

These were the entirety of Thales' information on the Mystics.

"Mystics?" Thales probed.

Jala glared at Thales and wore her goggles. "There were rumors that the person behind the Blood Bottle Gang was a Mystic; this person had not appeared for years."

"The Blood Bottle Gang?"

'So it is an underworld boss?' Thales frowned slightly. "What does a Mystic actually do?"

Unexpectedly, Jala shook her head coldly. "Don't ask." The female bartender did not hesitate to stop further attempts at questioning. "This is not something you should know."

Looking at Jala's expression, Thales awkwardly scratched his head.

'What is a Mystic? Is it the combat type that can conjure and throw fireballs from afar? Are they particularly powerful people? Do they have a special power like the Psionics?'

Thales had envisaged countless encounters with the Mystics. It was unfortunate that, from the information he received, none of the encounters would be optimistic.

One example would be the current situation.

Thales pushed the black cloth into his pocket and once again leaned down on Jala's back.

"From now on, we must be even more careful and try to avoid all the fighting so that we would not be exposed."

The bartender raised her head anxiously.

"I hope our luck isn't so bad that we would meet with the Mystic."

.....

A few minutes ago.

At Red Street Market, in an underground warehouse of a chess room.

A handsome man dressed in blue with dark-brown, long, curly hair, sat quietly on the side of an ancient war-game table. On top of it was a map used for the game. There were some game pieces on it, divided into black and red teams; these were the knights, swordsmen, guards, shield-warriors, catapults, prime ministers, and Kings.

This came from the Kingdom of Ayrandia. It involved historical references and the general knowledge of war. Nowadays, it was the most popular board game amongst the nobles—'The Rise and Fall of the Empire'. It simulates Kings of an ancient Empire and their two armies at war. To those living in comfort and have respected positions, this was the most effective way to show off their masculinity to attract women and also a pastime that was not risky.

Naturally, there were also a few great nobles who were peculiar. It is said that they used real people as chess pieces.

Under the light of the Everlasting Lamp, if one were to look closely at the map in the middle of the war-game board, it was a map of the streets of Red Street Market.

The handsome man deftly moved the chess pieces with his right hand, removing the black pieces or the red pieces from the map. There were more scattered black pieces than the gathered red pieces.

The two black prime minister pieces were in the middle, around them were a lot of black guards and swordsmen, a few red knights were pinning them down. At the periphery were many black knights and shield-warriors. They were overwhelmed in numbers by the two red Prime Ministers leading their swordsmen and guards.

In the middle of the map stood a red King, with a red guard by his side.

The handsome blue clothed man cheerfully played his game. Looking closely, there

was a light-blue energy sphere in his free left hand. It seemed to breathe, as though it was alive, and seemed to hold, inside it, a violent storm.

The man opened his mouth from time to time and seemed to say something. From his mouth, the waves of vibrations in the air could be seen. It turned into a ripple and vanished.

Strangely, no sound was emitted.

In the dark and lonely silence, the scene looked very abnormal.

At that moment, the man's brows suddenly furrowed. Without batting an eyelid, he removed a red catapult from the edge of the map.

However, a few minutes later, the man's brows tightened again. He slowly stretched his hand and removed the only remaining red swordsman from that position. The blue energy sphere in the man's left hand flashed for a moment. The storm inside seemed to dance.

He took a deep breath and spoke for the first time, "Who is in charge of guarding and intercepting in the Lower City District?" He seemed to ask the empty space.

A queer and firm reply then came from the frightening darkness, "Deformer Dorno and Undying Sven."

The man closed his eyes and shook his head. He then moved two other red swordsmen from elsewhere to where the two pieces were taken down. He moved one of them deeper as if to catch whatever defeated Dorno and Sven.

His mouth sent ripples into the air again, moving his lips silently for a while. Then, he gradually spoke to the voice from the void, "We have swallowed up Brother Talon and Moria an hour ago... So, is it reinforcements?" he muttered.

He hesitated for a moment. He then moved one of the two red prime ministers over, "This time, it will be fine."

However, at the next moment, the man seemed to sense something and his expression changed again. He moved his right hand to the edge of the other side of the map and removed two red swordsmen simultaneously.

The man's expression did not look good.

"Who is the one tasked in guarding the Western District?"

"It is the Leighton Siblings, Venomous Sting and Scorpion Whip." This time, the voice in the dark sounded cautious.

The blue-clad man did not speak. He perused the map back and forth several times with doubts and dissatisfaction, "Is it a piece from outside? What a headache. Wasn't there an agreement with the police that it is time for curfew?"

Finally, the man sighed helplessly. 'Did my level drop because I had not played these human games for a long time? Sigh.'

The man gently looked up with a complicated expression. "Groudon. Did you know? The significance of traps and mazes is to block the gateway and keep the stranded rats in. However, if the trap's entrance and exit have been opened up, it won't catch anything."

The man's expression turned cold. He resolutely took the guard that was next to the red King in the center of the map and moved it to where the two red swordsmen were.

The wind blew in the dark and there were no more voices.

The storm inside the blue energy sphere in the man's hand gradually stabilized.

Translation Notes:

1. YY novels are fantasy stories; about things that are not possible in reality.

Chapter 12

The Sound of Sabers and Knives (One)

"Detestable!"

The night that was filled with the sounds of battle was continuously interrupted by a wild laughter.

In the bloody streets, a Powerhouse of the Brotherhood, Morris, leaned against the door of the grocery store. He gasped and struggled to pull out a hiltless dagger from his shoulder.

Beside him, an elite of the Brotherhood had also collapsed. A similar dagger was stuck at the back of his head.

The Powerhouse of human trafficking, Morris, gasped and waved his hand to stop the Assassin Layork, who was about to rush up onto the roof.

"Do not chase! Kirks is trying to tire us out."

In the distance, the Blood Bottle Gang's 'Flying Blade Clown' Kirks dashed to the roof, laughing wildly.

"If we go on like this, we would be harassed to death. The clown is a Psionic Warrior. He is much more powerful compared to the usual Psionics."

Layork jumped down onto the streets and looked at the remaining five injured elites. He then frowned.

Morris took a deep breath and made a level-headed analysis. "Kirks and the Phantom Wind Follower were carefully selected to contain and hinder us from regrouping using their unique abilities. It would make things convenient for their supra class elites to slaughter our elites. Also, even if the clown killed us with his knives, it would be a better fate than meeting the Air Mystic." Morris stood up and solemnly waved his hand.

'Mystics. These people are calamity agents that must not be provoked.'

"The order to retreat should have been given. The same order should probably be given to Cenza as well. How many of us survive would depend on our luck."

Layork frowned. Morris turned to face the elites and waved for them to head out. The Assassin followed behind Morris and cautiously suggested, "We have to make a detour because of these air walls. The others would probably do the same... If we can find the Mystic himself, then—"

"Impossible!" Midway through his sentence, Layork's words were interrupted by Morris.

"Do not try to find that man!" Layork was puzzled. Morris had undoubtedly, directly, and resolutely rejected his suggestion. "Remember. Unless he directly confronts you, do not go and find trouble with the Mystic!"

Seeing Morris's cloudy expression, Layork was suddenly speechless and secretly frowned.

'Are Mystics really so terrifying?'

"This is the capital, Mystics would not easily show themselves, they would rely on their lackeys to kill us—this is our opportunity." Morris gritted his teeth and revealed a ferocious expression. "Just let these hypocrites who think they are as exalted as nobles see the strength of our Brotherhood, the strength of people from the 'lower strata'! We, who have killed our way out of a mountain of corpses and a sea of blood, are not people those lords from the Blood Blottle Gang could compare to.

"Even if we cannot leave, the Black Sword will avenge us! Even if the enemy is a Mystic!"

.....

Only a single, traditional candle burned inside the dark house.

"Are you saying that all of our men are trapped in Red Street Market? Up until now, no one in authority for this besides a few thugs has appeared?"

Nazri nodded and knelt on one knee, respectfully and fearfully, before his immediate

superior, Kobryant Lance, the 'Sleepless Eye'. He then reported, "It was just after my sentry shift started when the first rush of people arrived. According to them, when Morris ordered the retreat, the first few who wanted to rush out were ambushed and killed by Sven and Dorno."

"This continued until just now when Dorno and Sven died at the entrance. They then rushed out safely."

Nobody knew how old the Sleepless Eye, Kobryant Lance, was this year. They only knew that he was the head in charge of gathering intelligence ever since the establishment of the Brotherhood. He was strange, extremely mysterious, and secretive.

He would always hide in a dark, red cloak, revealing only his dry and thin chin. Without exception, anyone he stared at would feel a deep chill.

Lance pondered for a moment and slowly asked.

"Sven and Dorno were both from the Strongest Twelve. Sven is extremely tough, and Dorno is good at sneak attacks. Only people like the Thirteen Generals and above that could kill the both of them. Was it Layork? Moria? Could it be Adrienessa or Talon? Maybe it was Cenza and Morris, the two Powerhouses? Did you find the person responsible?"

Lance's words were soft and indistinct, as though it came from a different room. Nazri shook his head and tried to curb the fear in his heart.

'A real blunder. Morris would probably be very upset with me,' Lance thought to himself quietly but appeared calm on the surface. 'It is time to catch the rat in the group. The Brotherhood has been around for twelve years and is naturally different from the time when it was formed by some old men.'

Lance laughed strangely. He waved to Nazri and gave his orders, "Awaken and activate all Sleepless in the XC District regardless of whether they are on roster duty or not. Send the second and third patrols to Red Street Market! I want to know everything there in extreme detail from the rooftops to the gutters!"

"Yes, Sir!"

"Have those who escaped carefully recall the events in the streets. Pick the best of the

first patrol to sneak into Red Street Market and set up a patrol post, regardless of sacrifice. Pigeons, flares, torches. I do not care what you use, I want to establish contact with Cenza and Morris! I want an unimpeded channel of communication from Black Street to Red Street Market!"

"Yes, Sir!"

"Dispatch the fourth patrol to the other territories, from Black Street to Abandoned Houses, from the ditches to the canals, from the bazaar to the Western City Gate! I want them on full alert! We cannot be lax on precautionary measures at our headquarters, especially now!"

"Yes, Sir!"

"The fifth patrol is to be divided into two teams! One team is to inform the other leaders in the organization, the other will hurry to the Eckstedt Kingdom and bring that old man, Ramon, back! If he is unwilling, say that it is the will of the Black Sword!"

"Yes, Sir!"

Both Cenza and Morris were among the six Powerhouses who were not to be trifled with. The Blood Bottle Gang wanted to capture these two without facing huge losses. This was impossible.

Lance lowered his head and stroked the ruby ring on his hand. 'That damned fatty is someone who used to stay behind the Black Sword Hall! As for that tall, burly Cenza, hmph! The only thing that is harder than his fist is probably his temperament.

'Also... ' Lance secretly thought, 'There is also that damned cook, Edmund... The victor has not yet been determined.'

Lance's countenance suddenly changed as he noticed a strange expression on his subordinate. "Do you still have something to say?"

"Yes, Sir!" Nazri's cold sweat dripped as he gritted his teeth and leaned forward. "The brothers on patrol had just discovered that the beggars at the Abandoned Houses had all escaped! We only caught a few of them and had locked them in the water dungeon. We are now preparing to torture and interrogate them."

Lance's chin moved slightly. The Sleepless Eye's tone was calm as he asked,

"Interrogate them about?"

Nazri clenched his fist as his head hung and added, with difficulty, even more distressing information. "Quide Roda has died in the Abandoned Houses. His deputy, Nayer Rick, is currently outside requesting to see you."

.....

"Get down. Hide." Jala's tone turned cold again. "We cannot avoid the battle here."

Thales quickly slid down and hid behind a concealed stone pillar. He then took out the black cloth and covered his nose.

The surroundings were filled with the stench of blood. Thales had only taken two breaths but Jala had already moved swiftly and jumped onto the roof. She executed a backflip with her upper body bent over, both her hands touched the ground as though she was avoiding a hidden weapon.

Whoosh!

As soon as Jala stood up, Thales heard a fast wind reverberate throughout the streets.

Immediately after that, Jala dropped down from the roof. Both knives from her legs were already in her hands. The Wolf Limb Blades slashed out in succession, the blades swishing hurriedly.

Thales only heard the whooshing sound of clothes fluttering in the wind, though he could not discern the direction where the wind came from, and he did not know whether Jala had managed to cut anything.

After that, a gray and thin figure appeared on the street.

"Oho! Isn't this the Sunset Pub's bartender? You brought goggles along with you. Are you going for a swim? Do not be so surprised. I once disguised myself and had a drink in Black Street." A strange and feminine voice said in a frivolous and rude tone, "Are you wearing gray today as well? It is truly a pity that the weather is bad. Otherwise, we would have made a fine pair of matching sweethearts."

Jala had never spoken much during battle. She gently crouched on one knee. Thales knew that this motion would precede her next strike.

The gray-haired man walked a few steps forward. Under the faint moonlight, a tattoo could be seen faintly on his face.

"I should probably introduce myself. I am Midira Ralf. You can also call me the 'Phantom Wind Follower'.

Thales' heart tightened. 'Another one of the Strongest Twelve.'

"By the way, little Miss Bartender. Are you the one that got rid of Dorno and Sven? Do not misunderstand, I actually hate both rascals, but the boss has given the order for—"

Jala accelerated without warning. In the next moment, she had silently and swiftly arrived in front of him.

The strangely angled twin blades struck out and changed directions at the same time.

'Ceaseless Killing Blade!' Thales shouted excitedly in his heart.

After watching Jala fight in so many battles and executing lightning strikes, it would be a lie to say that the hope of being powerful and the desire for strength was not ignited in his heart.

However, Ralf vanished and the blade slashed at empty space!

'It didn't work?' Thales' heart tightened.

Jala did not stop. She whirled around and the Wolf Limb Blade in her right hand immediately swung in midair.

Ding! A clear and melodious sound of metal clashing.

Ralf's figure appeared on Jala's right and he hurriedly retreated two steps.

"Hey, why are you like Layork?" Ralf lightly flicked the hidden blade in the back of his left hand. He could not help but say, "Could it be that you people from the Brotherhood could tell where I am? Besides that, why do you not like to talk—"

Before he could finish, a Wolf Limb Blade flew at him.

'Instant Kill Blade.'

Whoosh!

The wind rose around Ralf. The Wolf Limb Blade wobbled in mid-flight.

Clang!

After that, the blade was knocked away by his sword, but Jala's figure had appeared in front of the Phantom Wind Follower as quickly as her blade.

Before he had the time to react, Jala's left hand performed a backhanded horizontal swing at Ralf's stomach.

'Did it cut?' Thales watched excitedly to see the results of the Instant Kill Blade.

However, he was disappointed to see Ralf's gray clothes move. It flew up at an incredible speed as it defied gravity.

'It was so dangerous, but he managed to avoid the blade!'

But this time, Thales felt as though Ralf had difficulty dodging it. This was because his figure blurred instead of disappearing without a trace.

Jala wanted to continue her assault but she seemed to have tripped on something invisible and failed to sustain her initially unstoppable offensive.

'The power of wind?' Thales lowered his head and recalled his past knowledge.

The female bartender quietly stepped back. She flipped up the other Wolf Limb Blade from the floor and waited for the next opportunity.

"That was close. The Brotherhood's bartenders have this kind of strength?"

Ralf gently wiped the gash on his abdomen, looking unhappy.

The wound was deeper than expected, and as a result of the blade's strange angle, its speed had also surpassed expectations. 'A knife play that could threaten supra class fighters? Looks familiar.'

Jala straightened her goggles. She held her blade and went down on one knee.

"Hey, bartender," Ralf suddenly spoke gloomily when he saw his opponent preparing to attack. "Before coming to Constellation, I lived in the upper reaches of the continent for a while. Once, I saw an assassination in the Sera Dukedom.

"It was the assassination that was the most straightforward, riskiest, and most difficult to fend against that I've seen in my life. The assassins used twin blades and attacked from roofs. They attacked swiftly and continuously, such that it was unstoppable."

Ralf looked down, his gentle voice sounded solemn and earnest. "'So, 'Migratory Locust Blade' Bannette Charleton, who is he to you?"

Jala did not reply but Thales instinctively felt that this was bad.

'Bannette Charleton?'

The next moment, the female bartender had sped in front of Ralf and attacked.

Thales was wrong. The mood of the silent bartender changed after hearing that name, she then gave a frenzied roar. "A stranger!" The female bartender then attacked angrily.

Thales had seen Jala's attacks many times before. So far, her attacks had always been quiet, simple, direct, and fatal, but this time it was different.

It was the first time Thales heard Jala's blade cause such a thundering sound.

Boom!

Ralf's expression changed rapidly.

.....

Clang!

There was a thunderclap as the sword and saber collided.

Glimmering energy broke out from the two figures. One was a star-blue color while the other was reddish.

The promising police nobleman, Kohen Karabeyan, gritted his teeth. He felt the power from the sword of his foe who was no weaker than him and was at least a supra class expert. He could not remember the last time he had encountered such an opponent.

'Was it since I had the battle with the Orcs or was it since I challenged Miranda?'

The two forces entangled but Kohen knew that he was falling into a disadvantageous position.

The star-blue power in his silver-white saber began to flash. Kohen knew that if this carried on, he would be defeated.

Then, he abruptly shook his body. Using this momentum, he broke out of the sword fight with the other man. The two figures suddenly separated a few steps away from each other as a result of the inertia.

Kohen finally stabilized after about six steps. His opponent managed to balance himself just after two steps.

Kohen had a somber look as he began to feel the need to reconsider Director Lorbec's words. He then turned to look at the formidable foe he faced and asked in a loud voice, "What you are using is one of the many sword forms of the Tower of Eradication."

The other person did not reply. "Yet you are willing to lower your pride and be in Blood Bottle Gang, become a hooligan, do evil, and bully the weak? Did the Tower of Eradication teach you the heart of the sword so that you can be someone else's lapdog and have the mindset of a person who bullies the weak but fears the strong?"

His opponent slowly turned around. His left shoulder was protected by a black half-body armor and his right arm was tied with a bandage. Under his red-and-black dress ornaments, his powerful muscles were vaguely visible.

He was a fair-skinned man, but he did not give an elegant or delicate impression—because his eyes projected a murderous gaze.

The man in the red-and-black clothing quietly sized up the police officer.

'This is the police rat that destroyed the boss' traps? This man's stance and actions... he was from the Tower of Eradication, and underwent military training?'

The red-and-black swordsman twirled the green sword that had a single-loop knuckle bow. Then, without a care in the world, he said, "Hey, cop! Since when did the police force dare to interfere with the affairs of the Blood Bottle Gang?"

Kohen stepped forward to get closer to the swordsman and coldly replied, "Right now, I am not a police officer. I am simply Kohen Karabeyan, a Swordsman of Eradication, asking another swordsman a question. Answer me!"

The scene was quiet for a while. The expression of the red-and-black swordsman gradually turned serious. "My sword's spirit is that of an unbridled will, freedom towards my own choices, and the pursuit of power.

"As long my wish is fulfilled, the Blood Bottle Gang, the Brotherhood, Shadow Shield, Kingdom's Secret Intelligence, Royal Guards, and even the Tower of Eradication, do not matter to me. So, your question is meaningless. As for you, cop, you are willing to be the nation's dog. I suppose the awareness of a dog is all that you obtained from that old Tower."

Hearing that the other Swordsman of Eradication did not have any respect for the Tower of Eradication and even had a slightly hostile attitude, Kohen's expression became solemn, mixed with astonishment and shock.

He remembered that when he was undergoing training at the Tower, his teacher had told him a story while having a drink. It was a story of internal dispute, battle, and tragedy.

Kohen had difficulty believing it and gritted his teeth as he said, "You... You are from an external group of Swordsman of Eradication. You are someone from the Disaster Sword group."

The moment his voice faded away, the red-and-black swordsman acted!

A reddish power of Eradication surged from his body like a flood, forming ferocious waves flowing along his green sword that slashed down with an astonishing momentum!

The sword was ruthless and fierce.

Kohen felt himself falling into a crimson vortex. The power of Eradication in his body was torn to pieces and he was unable to muster his power.

The swordsman's ruthlessness followed the sword straight towards Kohen's chest. His fair face was now cold like frost and no longer calm.

The red-and-black swordsman then said in a cold voice, "'Disaster Sword'? Disaster? Are you comparing us to those monsters? Is this how you address Lord Crassus' sword?"

Kohen gritted his teeth. The weapons of the two men swiftly clashed in the air.

"That is fine." While fighting, the swordsman still had the energy to speak. "We are destined to be the nemesis for you outdated, conservative, and sissy academics. One day, we will destroy your Tower of Eradication and prove your absurdity!" It was a cold, murderous tone.

At the next moment, the green sword surged forward. Kohen's saber blocked the green sword but at that instant, he felt the violent power of Eradication battering him like a raging tidal wave! Kohen was shocked. His opponent's power of Eradication was unhindered as it entered his body and corroded his strength like a strong acid.

The police's glimmering star-blue saber was instantly thrown off. Kohen gritted his teeth in astonishment and retreated again. However, the green sword was like a shadow following closely with murderous intentions. No matter which direction he turned to, the sword would not be far behind.

The young police officer tried to use his own power of Eradication to cleanse away the intruder in his body.

'This is the Glory of the Stars.' Kohen sighed. 'That which was supposed to showcase the power of Eradication in battle is currently being applied to me.'

At the next moment, the police officer's silver-white sword flashed out once more. This time, it headed towards the swordsman's throat.

However, his opponent was insane and reckless. He did not look at the approaching saber at all and drove the green sword that was like a red tide towards Kohen's heart. The crimson power of Eradication in the sword broke out and tore Kohen's clothes at his chest.

Kohen made a great effort to maintain his attack but hopelessly saw that as the saber and sword clashed, amid the strikes of the power of Eradication, the sword and saber

both went through!

'Shit! Is this the style of the Disaster Sword? Embracing a concept of such an insane sword style, unmatched power, disregarding all costs, and with no winners. Also... a never-before-seen violent and frightening power of Eradication that could invade the body... No wonder they were expelled from the Tower!'

Kohen forced a smile as he greeted his death.

Two weapons, one green, one white. One had a red tide that was frenzied and difficult to block. The other glimmered like the light of a faint star.

The outcome of the battle was set.

Chapter 13

The Sound of Sabers and Knives (Two)

Thales had never seen Jala's knife attack a person with such wrath and momentum before. He could vaguely feel the suffocating force contained in the two Wolf Limb Blades.

Ralf gathered all his strength and used his two hidden blades to protect his stomach. He then retreated quickly.

The female bartender charged forwards even more fiercely in the blink of an eye, her twin blades slashing down like a thunderbolt.

The two moved in synchronicity as though they were dancing, but inelegantly. Images of Ralf's knives then appeared and instantly greeted both of Jala's blades.

Cling! Clang!

The sounds of battle continued.

The hidden blades stopped Jala's twin blades countless times. Her twin blades also deflected Ralf's hidden blades countless times. Both of them moved extremely quickly. At the street side, the shops' signboards and shopfronts flashed by. Then, both of them seemed to stop as they concentrated on analyzing the movements of the other party.

Thales watched attentively and even forgot to breathe.

However, the offensive and defensive movements were very obvious. Jala was using her twin blades to attack the vital points while Ralf was only defending with his two hidden blades.

One attacked and one defended, it was a fight of skill and speed.

But in the next attack, the Wolf Limb Blade in Jala's left hand suddenly burst out with a thunderous sound, creating a sudden jolt and knocking away one of Ralf's hidden blades that was used in blocking.

Jala's unexpected trump card maneuver surprised Ralf greatly. He made one mistake and every step thereafter became another mistake. Failing to intercept this blade caused a delay in withdrawing his other knife, his vital stomach area became exposed to Jala's left blade.

Slash!

The Wolf Limb Blade cut into his clothes and his chest.

At the moment of life and death, Ralf did not hesitate to use his Psionic skill.

The name 'Phantom Wind Follower' was not an undeserved reputation. The man tucked his lips and the tattoo on his face emitted a white light. With a sudden burst, a violent whirlwind appeared between the two, causing both Jala and himself to move towards different directions.

Ralf stomped his foot and, with unexpected deftness, used the force of the fierce gale to jump up into the air, leaving behind only bloodstained traces.

The female bartender was forced to stop her pace. She withdrew her arms and adjusted herself to adapt to the sudden wind. The thunderous roar of her twin blades had also been cut off.

From a distance, Thales could not feel the gust of wind, but this did not affect his judgment—both of them were simultaneously affected by the wind. Ralf was thrown back while Jala was stopped.

The wind did not stop. Instead, it continued to grow larger. Ralf was like a kite floating in midair. His shining tattoos became even more dazzling. The female bartender had no choice but to bend her knee to resist the increasing wind. At the same time, she took the opportunity to recover her body strength.

Ralf was no longer smiling mischievously. The pain in his chest terrified him. 'This little girl is a big problem and her strength is probably no lesser than the Thirteen Generals of the Brotherhood.'

Recalling the action of the twin blades, the Phantom Wind Follower decided that he cannot allow her any opportunity to use her twin blades and turn the tables. Fortunately for him, she had expended a lot of energy during that offensive.

The Phantom Wind Follower's face turned cold. He took out the hidden blades with both hands.

The wind rose.

Under the cover of the wind, Ralf demonstrated once more his phantom-like form. The next moment, Ralf had appeared above Jala's head.

Jala gritted her teeth and immediately swung her knife upwards.

Clang!

However, Ralf retreated after a single blow. His figure was like the wind and had disappeared far away. It gave Jala no chance to counterattack, nor the opportunity to take the offensive.

Cling!

Ralf's hidden blades emerged once again, this time from at Jala's lower left side. He attacked and missed, immediately retreating once more.

"As long as your sudden and continuous attacks are interrupted, the famous assassination style of the Charleton Family would no longer work." Ralf's voice came again from the wind.

Jala struggled to defend against her opponent's guerrilla tactics. Because of the wind assaulting her, she also had to use a lot of energy to maintain her movements. At the same time, she must predict where Ralf was going to attack next.

Thales watched nervously. 'What do I do?'

Ralf's gentle voice came from all directions again.

"Tell me. Why is the Charleton family hiding together with the Brotherhood? Maybe we can sit down and talk about it."

Jala's expression turned solemn. She unexpectedly closed her eyes and seemed to have made a decision.

Jala reversed her grip on the twin blades and fiercely inserted them into the earth at

her feet. Ralf's hidden blades once again appeared over her head.

But this time, Jala spun around on the spot. The knives that were stuck to the ground suddenly turned, in tandem with her arms!

Boom!

There was a thunderous sound. The rocks from the ground were sent flying several meters up. The flying rocks obstructed Ralf's line of vision. The blades flashed faintly among the rocks!

Ralf roared as he retreated. The tattoo on his face glowed even brighter. The wind in the sky suddenly sped up. It whirled with a terrifying force, scraping the earth and scattering it everywhere. In the fierce gale, the rocks flew everywhere.

At that moment, an entranced Thales exposed half his head from his hiding place as he watched the battle. He suddenly heard a hoarse voice that was hard to identify.

"Lower your head."

Thales instinctively lowered his head without any time to daydream.

Whoosh!

A rock from the battle flew over Thales' head, a few of them crashing into the side entrance of a store behind Thales. The wooden door that was hit caved in.

Thales looked behind and patted his chest in cold sweat. 'If I had not lowered my head... '

Before he could react, a slim but valiant figure appeared beside his hiding place.

"Leave quickly."

Thales was dumbfounded.

In front of him, Jala was not doing well. At that moment, the once valiant female bartender looked tired. She was gasping for breath and her left arm was trembling.

"He has found my weakness, and as I am unable to continuously attack him, I cannot

defeat him." The female bartender placed her hand on Thales' shoulder and gave an embarrassed smile. "If things keep going this way you will be discovered eventually. I will lead him away. After that, you must leave alone."

"Go down the left alley. Cover your breath with the black cloth. If you hear any sound, turn around immediately and use a different route. The Brotherhood did not attack very far inside. As long as you cross the center of the Red Street Market, there should be fewer people."

"Brat, even though you're alone, you must survive!"

Thales stared dumbfoundedly at the female bartender who suddenly bid her farewell. That was until her figure darted back towards the center of the gale wind outside the streets.

Thales subconsciously stretched out his hand to grab her back.

'Jala.'

The boy listened to the sound of fighting that once again echoed in the distance. He then remembered a scene. It was at night behind the Sunset Pub's kitchen, and there was dog meat in front of him.

"Eat a little slower, brat! This dog is something I caught. So what if I'm a bartender? I am Jala Cha... I am Jala. I am a well-trained bartender. You can't take this dog thigh! You won't be able to bite it."

'Goodbye, Sister Jala. Goodbye, JC.'

Thales resolutely turned around and proceeded towards the depths of the Red Street Market, 'I must live. I owe this to Jala.'

The sound of battle behind him traveled further and further away.

.....

On a messy battlefield.

Kohen leaned against his sword. Holding onto the wall with his left hand, he knelt down and coughed harshly. The police officer's chest was bleeding.

His left chest had been skewered. His lungs were injured and his heart was almost affected. Besides that, his opponent's violent power of Eradication was still fluctuating in his wounds.

Even Kohen's prided power of Eradication, 'Glory of the Stars', could not withstand it.

But the enemy... Kohen raised his head to look at the stoic-looking, red-and-black swordsman.

The man's left pauldron was pierced by Kohen's 'blind' thrust. The shoulder was bleeding, there was a gash on both his left chin and his neck. However, his situation was far better compared to Kohen's.

At the moment their swords were about to pierce one another, the two men displayed completely different fighting achievements.

Kohen executed a part of the Glory of Stars and condensed that part of the power into a Star Shield to protect his heart. The shield deviated the attack that was aimed at his vitals, and then, Kohen thrust forward with all his might with the saber in hand.

As for the red-black swordsman, he ignored the silvery white saber aimed at his throat. Instead, when the saber was about to hit, he became calmer and his attacks became faster. His sword quickly reached Kohen and pierced his chest. He then took advantage of the moment when Kohen's saber trembled to lower his head and avoid the attack to his throat, leaving behind only gashes on his neck and chin. He further endured Kohen's strike at his pauldron to push his sword in deeper.

The relative superiority was evident.

"You are a great swordsman," The red-black swordsman said suddenly. "Confronting such a move, most people would attempt to dodge before fighting back, but you were determined to pierce through it. The army must have taught you how to condense and form that shield, right?"

Kohen ferociously coughed up blood and laughed. "A veteran of the army told me that on the battlefield, one must have a life-saving skill. That way, a person would live longer than his enemies and have fewer injuries than them."

The red-black swordsman was silent for a while before chuckling. "He has surely never been a suicide squad member."

Kohen gasped and his brow wrinkled. "At the Western battlefield, the Barren Bone and Orc assault team suicide squads, have you done that before?"

The red-black swordsman nodded. "Three times."

"Which squad?" Kohen licked the blood in his mouth and lifted his head.

"The Skull Guards. Seventeenth Suicide Squad."

"Fakenhaz's suicide squad, three times?" Kohen gave a knowing smile. "Looks like you have offended an important person."

"What about you, police officer?" The red-black swordsman quietly asked.

"Crow Guards. Second Shock Brigade."

"Thunderbolt Crow of the Second Shock Brigade?" The swordsman frowned. "Hmph. I had thought that 'Karabeyan' sounded familiar. Looks like it was a nobleman."

Kohen spat blood out and laughed bitterly. "In fact, I always wanted to ask—Was the Chaca wine given before charging delicious? My father never allowed me to drink it."

"It is difficult to get to drink it. Damned quartermaster even wanted to embezzle money from the wine of dead people," the swordsman coldly replied.

"Really?"

"Yeah."

The conversation between the two suddenly stopped.

The red-black swordsman's ruthlessness and rage had died away. Kohen's helplessness and gasps had also diminished.

"Groudon Raymer of the Seventeenth Suicide Squad in the Skull Guards. Shield Saber troops." The red-black swordsman, Groudon, said in a cold voice, "That is my name. It is an honor to fight you, Your Excellency, police officer."

"Kohen Karabeyan of the Second Shock Brigade in the Crow Guards. Combat Captain." Kohen gave a sad smile. "The honor is mine. Err, Your Excellency, gang hooligan?"

Kohen stopped smiling in the next second. They both looked at each other seriously. On Kohen's saber, the Glory of the Stars flickered.

Violent energy surged through Groudon's right arm, such that the blood vessels seemed to stand out. The sword strike that determined life and death—that is the moment of the Swordsman of Eradication.

It was an honor, sacred and cannot be blasphemed. But at the next moment, both their expressions changed!

They suddenly heard the howling of a gale-force wind from next door. A slim and heroic figure wielding twin blades fell from the air and landed on the street.

'This distance should be enough.' The female bartender gasped for breath and saw the two figures, one standing, and one kneeling.

She then saw Kohen's apparel.

'I hope the brat can... Eh? The kingdom's police? This is a war between the underworld gangs. Why is this cop here?'

Kohen and Groudon also stared at her in surprise.

'Another gang member?' Kohen thought. 'I hope she is not from the Blood Bottle Gang.'

'This woman. I did not hear about her from His Excellency.' Groudon thought to himself. 'Is she a chess piece from outside?'

"You cannot run anymore, bartender girl!" The wind howled, accompanied by a hoarse, effeminate voice. Ralf appeared at a corner and also saw the two swordsmen.

"Groudon? Shouldn't you be guarding by His Excellency's side?" Ralf looked at the swordsman and frowned. "Why are you here with this... cop?"

'Good.' Kohen thought. 'They are partners. So... '

The police turned towards the bartender. 'Since this woman is my opponent's enemy, she shouldn't be part of the Blood Bottle Gang.'

"Focus on cleaning up your rat," Groudon the red-black swordsman did not seem to

want to talk to Ralf. "I will take care of my task."

After speaking, Groudon lifted his saber grimly at Kohen, the officer also stood up slowly. He gritted his teeth and held his silver saber horizontally at his chest.

Ralf curled his lips. The wind kept rumbling by his side.

Jala took a deep breath and knelt down to adjust her angle.

All four of them understood the situation. There were two from Blood Bottle Gang, one from the Brotherhood, and one a police officer.

The next moment, all four of them moved!

Groudon's saber flashed red and mercilessly pursued Kohen's heart!

Kohen's face turned white as he confronted Groudon. Drawing his saber he made a specialized defensive move.

Ralf's figure disappeared again but the wind charged towards Jala.

Jala's body rose suddenly, her twin blades seemed to slash the air as she advanced, but she unexpectedly charged towards...

Kohen!

.....

Thales carefully covered his breath with the black cloth as he ran away. He had already bypassed the deathmatch between the two groups of elite thugs.

Among the crowd was a two-meters-tall figure that stood out. He possessed a powerful, striking force that sent the Blood Bottle Gang members in red bandanas flying wherever he went.

'This person must be a master from the Brotherhood. He is either one of the thirteen Generals or one of the six Powerhouses. Either way, he could not be one of the three legendary Assassins.'

Thales just quietly bypassed them. This was not his war. He wanted to run away, not

just for himself, but also for Jala and the beggars of the Sixth House.

Thales turned a corner and crashed right into an invisible air barrier. At that time, he still did not know that this was a master's famous Air Wall.

In a bad mood, he hit the barrier once. 'Damned Mystic. Now I need to make another detour. I hope I don't meet anyone.'

Thales then remembered that a voice had told him to lower his head. At first, he had thought that the person was Jala. After all, she had immediately appeared in front of him then. But later, he realized that this voice could not belong to Jala. It was a hoarse voice that was difficult to differentiate. Jala, Ralf, and himself were not the only ones there; there was a fourth person.

Thales' scalp tightened. He suddenly thought, 'If the voice that suddenly appeared belonged to a fourth person, why did Jala and Ralf not notice it? Jala had obviously stood in front of me after that rock shot behind me.'

Thales had concluded without a doubt that this person's strength was more frightening than Jala and Ralf's.

'If he is not hostile, why did he not come out and help?'

Bump! Thales ran into another invisible barrier.

He patted his head in annoyance.

There are more and more of these tricks. Don't you need money to run these?

Thales turned towards another direction and ran.

Bump!

There was another barrier. This time, Thales did not manage to stop himself and fell to the ground. The left side of his forehead knocked on the corner of a house.

Thales grimaced and rubbed his head. He lifted his bleeding head and looked ahead.

'Something is wrong.'

He was at the intersection. The surroundings were dark but according to his memory, he should be near the center of the Red Street Market. Even the sounds of slaughter were getting further away. Thales then turned towards the other three directions. He moved his foot forward lightly and stretched out his hands. He then felt the barriers at two nearby areas.

'Three roads were sealed?' Thales was startled. 'It's starting to become dark and mysterious, like a horror movie.'

Thales was silent for a moment. He then turned towards the only direction that did not have any barriers. He silently extended his hand and, sure enough, walked on continuously, unhindered for more than ten meters.

'It is like an exit that was deliberately left here.' Thales' heart sank more and more, 'Unexpectedly, I ended up coming here. Sigh... Fate is truly a bitch. '

Thales suddenly dropped his right hand that was covering his forehead, letting his blood drip continuously on the ground.

The boy resolutely walked another dozen steps along the open street until he was near a building. At the center of the building was an ajar, large wooden door.

Thales looked up at the huge sign on the door. The barely literate boy could just make out the words. It was something he learned when he went begging at the Black Gold Casino.

That word was 'Chess'.

Thales turned around and looked at the other three blocked roads. He then remembered the bleeding and pain in his head.

'Nowhere else to go'

"This invitation is really crude," Thales muttered.

However, he sighed and stopped hesitating. He pushed open the half-opened door and walked into the chess room in the center of the Red Street Market.

It was pitch dark inside. There was only a bit of light in the distance from something that resembled an old-fashioned candle.

'They really know how to set the atmosphere.'

"Welcome to my amusement park, my little friend."

While walking past the chess tables (and bumping into a lot of them), Thales heard a delighted and relaxed voice.

"My name is Asda Sakern. My colleagues are accustomed to calling me, the Air Mystic."

A very long time passed.

Thales exhausted two lives worth of strength to calm himself down.

There was only a single candle light flickering faintly in the darkness ahead. It was the entrance to the cellar of the chess room.

Thales inhaled deeply and descended into the cellar. He then held his breath and suppressed his heart that was beating wildly.

In front was a charming man with long, dark brown hair and blue clothes. The man was seated at a long table. He smiled and nodded at Thales.

"As for the issue of the invitation, I will pay more attention to it the next time."

.....

At the inner altar of Sunset Temple.

A gray-haired, and middle-aged noble could not suppress the excitement in his heart. In front of him, the flame from the small Lamp carrying the future of the kingdom grew bigger and bigger. The red color of the flame became brighter and brighter.

He lifted the Lamp and strode out of the inner altar of the temple.

Behind him, an elder priest was alarmed. He stretched out his hand, wanting to obstruct the way, but suddenly thought of something and stopped his hand.

The priest breathed a sigh of relief. He watched the figure of the noble walk further away and slowly sat down.

After a long while, the elderly priest called out to the trainee Niah.

"Prepare yourself. From tomorrow onwards, open up the inner altar."

Chapter 14

Asda Sakern

Even in Asda Sakern's very long life, his first impression of the boy was very interesting and ridiculous.

The black-haired boy seemed to be in a sorry situation under the dim candlelight. Blood dripped from his forehead, his young face was covered in patches of blue and purple, his neck was red with strangulation marks. The boy trembled slightly. He wore tattered clothes made from hemp and a dagger was rigidly tied to the legs.

After hearing Asda's identity, the boy seemed to be at a loss. The boy's hand was on his chest and he was slightly nervous. He seemed to vaguely understand the meaning of the word 'Mystic'. The pressure in different parts of his body changed suddenly, such that even his breath was mistier.

'However, his eyes are out of the ordinary. Yes. His queer eyes are not filled with panic and vigilance. Instead, they seem to be filled with... curiosity and excitement?'

What Thales thought in his mind at the time surprised even himself.

After being surprised upon hearing that the man was a Mystic, he suddenly felt the impulse to ask what was a Mystic.

'Do I have an occupational disease?'

It was at this moment when Thales saw something at the corner of his eyes. At a dark corner were three odd spheres placed on the ground. Each sphere was as large as a person, but when Thales faintly made out the hands and feet on the sphere, he suddenly turned pale.

"I believe you have already met Talon and Moria of the Brotherhood." The Mystic Asda noticed his gaze and answered with a grin, "They were very ambitious. They went straight to the Red Street Market from the start.

"Apologies, I am not accustomed to the choking or crushing style like Morris; I prefer

simpler methods."

'Molding a person into a spherical shape is simpler?' Thales heart sank as he silently criticized.

"Come, child," Asda said with a laugh. His voice was pleasant, graceful and courteous even. "Come here and look at my chessboard."

Thales gulped a mouthful of saliva and turned around. Chasing the image of the human flesh-spheres out of his head, he then quickly analyzed his situation. After that, Thales saw that Asda's left hand had a blue energy sphere that looked like it was a 3D projection. (He knew it was not.) He decisively eliminated the idea of putting a dagger through the man's neck.

Thales calmly took three breaths—according to the method used in his past life for viva examinations—before walking up slowly.

'If it is a blessing, it is not a curse. If it is a curse, it is unavoidable.'

Asda gave a ghost of a smile towards the boy, whose movements were like an adult, as he waited for the boy to get nearer to the chessboard. Just as he was about to open his mouth he was surprised to see the boy pull out a chair and take a seat. He then frowned, seemingly dissatisfied with the view. He finally got down from the chair and pushed it closer towards Asda before climbing back up to sit.

"Urgh, my legs are sore." Thales laughed awkwardly at Asda. He accidentally tore open the wound on his forehead and gave a harsh cry from the pain.

"That is my oversight."

Asda turned around with great interest and tapped his right hand lightly. Something seemingly pressed down on the wound on Thales' forehead and the blood stopped flowing out.

"This is... Did you raise and regulate the air pressure?" Thales touched his forehead in surprise and found an invisible film isolating his hand from the wound.

Asda stopped smiling and nodded quietly.

"That's right. Did your teacher teach you Physics?"

"Err... No." Thales let go of his hands embarrassingly. It seemed Asda had regarded him as a noble or a boy from a rich family.

Asda nodded and then turned to the chessboard on the table. "Can you recognize this?"

Thales looked carefully at the map on the table. "A board game with the Red Street Market as the map... No, this is the map of the current battle outside! The red pieces are the Blood Bottle Gang, the black pieces are the Brotherhood!" Thales answered suddenly.

"Of course." Asda expressionlessly stretched out his right hand. Two black pieces and a crystal piece flew from afar and he caught them with his hand.

"This should have been a perfect trap. In a short while, I would have Morris and Cenza die here. However, things always have a way of fouling up, don't they?"

The three chess pieces flew around Thales' head like birds.

'Just treat it like a magic trick.' Thales forced himself to stay calm as he watched Asda's performance.

"Firstly, the men in my team are all useless. Obviously, they should have attacked Morris and Cenza at the first instance and kill them at all costs. Instead, they timidly went around the enemy and used guerrilla tactics to whittle them down. It's a typical case of bullying the weak and avoiding the strong.

"Secondly, I am not sure if it was reinforcements from the Brotherhood, but in short, the entrance of an unexpected piece had disrupted my deployment."

As Asda narrated emotionlessly, one of the pieces above Thales' head fell onto the board.

"This is the one that followed you. Your comrade that came from the Lower City District had frightening speed and defeated Dorno and Sven in one face-off. Ralf is still chasing behind her right now. Even Rumeno, the Psionic with tracking abilities, could not find a trace of him in the dust. I can only say that it is gratifying for the Brotherhood to have such a master among the younger generation."

The black swordsman piece landed on the map, standing together with a red

swordsman, one in the front and one at the back. Further away was a red prime minister.

Thales knew he was talking about Jala and felt uneasy. But he hoped from the bottom of his heart that she was safe, especially when there was still a red prime minister in the distance.

"The breach is fatal and there were a lot of pieces that escaped. All of them were just underlings, but..." Asda sighed. "Through them, the Black Street Brotherhood's headquarters found out about the situation here an hour earlier than I expected. I can feel that Lance and his subordinates have already taken control of the entrance.

"The rat trap is broken."

He lowered his head, looking regretful and sorrowful. At that moment, Thales almost thought that the person in front of him was a compassionate temple priest.

But, Asda immediately raised his head. The sad expression on his face vanished without a trace. He gently waved his fingers and two other pieces that were suspended in the air began to spin around again.

"This one came from the other direction. It is not known which side he is on. He killed the Leighton siblings faster than it would take to slaughter two pigs. This guy cannot be stopped by anyone nearby. I could only send out Groudou who had been by my side. Now, I do not have anyone here that I can speak to."

Asda seemed dissatisfied and dropped the crystal knight from the air, placing it together with a red guard.

"This piece is probably from a different faction. If it does not belong to a noble, it would be from the government. This was also unforeseen."

Thales swallowed his saliva again.

"The last one would be you. As nobody was available, I had to personally invite you." Asda turned his head, his eyes sharpened.

The last, small, black piece fell from the sky and landed in the center of the map, beside a red King. Thales became extremely nervous.

"Tell me. Where are you from?" Asda leaned back. His expression was difficult to discern. "Why did the people of the Brotherhood send you to the center of Red Street Market? Are you a frightening weapon sent here to assassinate me? Perhaps you have important information or a parcel to exchange with another chess piece?"

"I hope you can give me a friendly reply voluntarily instead of shouting 'Go to hell, Mystic' and then rushing forward. To be honest, that is just suicide."

Asda quietly looked at him, his eyes sincere. His eyes were unlike Rick's which were full of ulterior motives. The sincerity in Asda's eyes was emotionless as though he did not care about the answer to his question.

At that moment, Thales thought that the man in front of him was not human.

'Stay calm, Thales, stay calm.'

The boy reminded himself, trying to recall his viva presentation and seminar speeches—how to introduce the audience to an unknown domain based on their current understanding.

'I'm supposed to be good at this right?'

Thales took a deep breath. "Mister Asda Sakern, are you saying that by sitting here, you would be able to know what is going on in the entire Red Street Market?" Thales first needed to gather intelligence.

"Not exactly," Asda replied indifferently. "I will know even the slightest change of the air in the whole street. From the change in air pressure in the body to the flow of air outside the body. In other words, anything that breathes in the Red Street Market is being monitored by me."

'This is his ability. Is it a Psionic skill? Is this why he was called the Air Mystic?' Thales secretly thought to himself, 'No wonder the Brotherhood was so badly beaten.'

"Then you should know..." Thales began to comb through his own words and logic to look for a life-preserving opportunity in the exchange of words. "Along the way, my companion and I cautiously tried to avoid confrontation. We only fought when there was no choice, regardless of whether they were from the Blood Bottle Gang or the Brotherhood. I believe this can prove that we are not from the Brotherhood. At the very least, we did not come here for the Brotherhood but had entered the battlefield

inadvertently. We have no intention of opposing you."

"It makes sense." Asda nodded, still devoid of emotion. However, his tone did not soften. "But you still took my pawns. I don't care about their lives, but I care that my plans and objectives are being interrupted—it does not matter whether it was intentional or not. Even the most corrupt judge would not turn a blind eye to manslaughter, would he? And you have not answered my question: Who are you and why are you so important?"

Hearing this Thales quickly revised his message. "I am an enemy of the Brotherhood!"

These words made Asda raised his head slightly.

Thales had realized the *raison d'être* and decided to reveal part of the truth, "I am just an ordinary beggar who fled after offending a high-ranking person of the Brotherhood. Because the Brotherhood's eyes and ears are all over the Lower City District, my only chance was the adjacent Red Street Market belonging to the Blood Bottle Gang. However, my companion and I did not expect the gang war to take place tonight and so, inadvertently..."

"I apologize for our recklessness. I can issue... I mean, I can provide you compensation once I am able to. I believe my future value will definitely be worth your while in giving me a chance.

"I am already destined to become an enemy of the Brotherhood. Even if I am small and weak, the enemy of an enemy is a friend. I believe the Blood Bottle Gang does not need to help the Brotherhood eliminate a potential enemy, do they?"

Asda narrowed his eyes. "Truly an eloquent child."

"That is all?"

"That is all."

Asda remained silent for a long time. There was an unexpected, indistinct smile on his face.

"There is no huge change of air pressure in the body. Although the breathing feels nervous, it was also smooth. Sigh. Although you did not say everything, you also did not lie."

The Mystic gave a wry smile and shook his head. He then sincerely said, "So, your presence and the disruption of the chess game—it is all just a coincidence. In fact, I do not care about those pieces you took. After all, those are just small pieces. The so-called Strongest Twelve, thirteen Generals, Psionic Warriors, six Powerhouses. Apart from Cenza, these people are all merely ordinary class and supra class.

"Even the Blood Bottle Gang is nothing but a relatively large chess piece. Even when you disrupted my plan and dismantled my trap, I didn't care too much about it." Asda wore a wry smile and looked at Thales.

"But unexpectedly, my plan was destroyed by accidents and coincidences. This frustrates me. Accidents, accidents. Haha. I am starting to understand Empress Hellen's source of strength."

'What a strange and abnormal person.' Thales' nervousness lessened as he observed the Air Mystic.

"The world is truly marvelous." Asda suddenly burst into laughter. "Child. Did you know that Mystics are born from accidents?"

Thales' heart began to beat faster. He felt an inexplicable danger from the Mystic who had a strange expression.

"A long time ago, there was only magic and no mystic energy." Asda showed a complicated, yearnful expression. "Wizards pursued the truths of the world. They used all kinds of ingenious methods and wisdom to take advantage of the natural resources and energies in the world, to create an even more beautiful world.

"That was until one day, a low-ranked wizard apprentice accidentally discovered that his magic was not stable. It was as though the magic had a life of its own and rebelled against its master."

The next moment, Thales' whole body quivered. He felt a huge and strong force surge from below into his body.

The boy was shocked to find himself floating up. The flustered boy reached for the table edge in panic, but he found himself floating higher and higher. His arm could no longer reach the table.

He quickly looked towards Asda and realized in horror that the Mystic had an

expression filled with agony and mania.

"Yes. Everything began like this! A wizard apprentice accidentally lost control!" Asda nervously said to himself as he gently picked up the black piece that had just fallen on the map.

Thales watched the pawn get taken away and his heart sank. He already knew what the Mystic wanted to do.

"From instability to complete loss of control, and thence until domination. The world you are familiar with begins to collapse, fear and panic strike. Nobody can save you except yourself."

Thales painfully discovered that the flow of air around his body started to accelerate; the atmospheric pressure began to change.

"Nobody knew what he discovered. But when he came back to the world, people found out that he was no longer a wizard, he was no longer human, he was no longer an ordinary man."

As the atmospheric pressure and the temperature rose, the terrified Thales felt the air become stuffy and he began to sweat profusely.

"It was just a one-time loss of control. He unintentionally killed the two Gods. It was just like how one trampled on two ants accidentally."

Asda's words were extremely grim. He slowly turned and his lips curved upwards.

'This crazy man!' Thales stopped clenching his teeth and wanted to speak but found that his voice would not pass his throat.

"That was the first Mystic. He was also the most powerful Mystic throughout history. The wizards were horrified to find that their incantations, spells, and research were like a child's trickery! The Gods were bewildered to find that even those with supernatural powers and divinity collapsed on the first blow. How ridiculous!

"The colorful era of the naïve and ignorant wizards has ended. The nascent Mystic, with a foothold beyond space, surpassed all the Gods, and prevailed over all living things."

In the heat, Thales began to feel himself getting crushed from all directions. He felt his limbs pressed into his body. His body slowly shrunk into a ball as he floated in the air. It was truly horrifying. It was like being squeezed into a washing machine in his previous life!

"Fear. Humans definitely have fear! Unfettered power that only a small number of people can enjoy. How could they not fear it?"

In the air, Thales felt his whole body begin to lose his strength. He also could not help but notice that Asda had placed himself outside of mankind.

"And so, the war began." Asda gently stood up, the energy sphere in his left hand continued to spin, "Perhaps it was a because of chance...

"...that we lost."

"I could only hide in this lawless place, running the stupid Blood Bottle Gang, waiting for that remote and slim hope. Each step and each breath must be taken with the utmost care."

Asda lowered his head in desolation. Without looking, he raised his right hand at Thales who still hung in midair. He then grasped firmly.

Boom!

The joints in Thales' body began to make loud, popping noises. His eardrums felt like they were being crushed. The blood in his body surged.

'Is this what it means to "kill someone while chatting with him"?' Thales thought hopelessly. His brain was no longer clear.

'Is it like pinching an ant to death?'

The forehead-wound that had been healed by Asda gushed once more with red blood...

'Is this a Mystic? It feels no different from psionic abilities.'

As Thales neared Death's door, he caught Asda's left hand in the corner of his eye. A blue ball of light constantly whirled between the man's fingers. It was as though it was

churning an infinite storm.

Thales' chest, scalded by the silver coin, suddenly started to burn with pain. The muscles all over his body were burning up.

It was getting hotter, burning more and more.

"So, the Mystics who still possessed mystic energy had to stay in hiding, to struggle like rats in the sewers." Asda could not help but frown as he said the last sentence. His last words should have been accompanied by the death of the subject.

'Did my control decline?' The Mystic did not think much about it. He was indifferent as he tightened his grip again.

However, at that moment, in the midst of the burning illusion, Thales felt a little happy. The pain from being crushed by the atmospheric pressure seemed to have decreased. He found himself able to speak again. With effort, he opened his mouth and looked at the energy sphere in Asda's hand.

'I hate people who hold a ball and pretend to be all bad*ss.'

"Damn you, Mystic energy!" Thales heard himself say, and then heat radiated from his body.

Asda looked surprised. The dark chess room was suddenly basked in a red light from an unknown source. Asda looked around in shock and immediately found the source of the red light. He looked down at his left hand and saw a trace of radiant red light appear inside his blue energy sphere.

A trace.

A dot.

A line.

A section.

The red light spread out slowly until it corroded the entire energy sphere.

"No! This is... This is..." Asda muttered as though he had just seen an inconceivably

beautiful scenery.

The translucent blue energy sphere in Asda's hand suddenly stopped spinning. The energy sphere then turned red and then disappeared from his left hand. The Air Mystic suddenly raised his head to look at Thales who was in the air.

In Thales' right hand was a red energy sphere that floated quietly. Asda's eyes then looked excited. "You are—"

Boom!

Before the Mystic could finish speaking to Thales, the world seemed to shatter.

The energy sphere suddenly exploded! An invisible energy flashed from inside and transformed into a tremendous and magnificent power.

If the cellar of the chess room was like a balloon, then the balloon had just been blasted into pieces! Doors and windows, glass, chessboards, candles and everything... blown away and smashed up.

The beams and pillars of the house suddenly exploded.

Boom!

Asda was hit by a huge force that was like a heavy hammer. He flew back and crashed into the wall.

Thales was also knocked back by the force, causing him to crash heavily into the ceiling. But the ceiling and the walls also exploded. The shackle that seemed to curb his strength had vanished, along with his consciousness.

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On the streets.

Boom!

Morris had just dropped two Blood Bottle Gang men who were suffocated by his psionic power. He was surprised to hear the explosion.

'The extent of this explosion... it is at least a battle of 'supreme class.' Is it Cenza? Did Cenza meet the Air Mystic?

'No... No! Then Cenza must be dead.' Morris thought bitterly. The elites around Morris were also surprised.

"Boss!" The Assassin Layork was covered in blood. He quickly rushed over from afar. His expression showed mixed feelings. He was out of breath as he spoke.

"The air wall... The air wall has disappeared!"

Chapter 15

Yodel Cato At Your Service

Groudon and Jala shot towards Kohen at top speed.

If Kohen was a point, then he would be the point that would form a right angle based on the direction where Jala and Groudon were charging towards him—Groudon from the north, and Jala from the east.

Groudon growled, his blood vessels bulging as he thrust his red sword towards Kohen, not resting until his sword draws the blood of his enemy.

At the start, Kohen was stunned for a moment. However, Jala lightly pointed at his left shoulder and then pointed at his right shoulder. Kohen was already preparing to draw his sword to strike Groudon, but he saw the look behind her goggles.

The police officer immediately understood Jala's intentions. Looking at his heavy injuries, he did not think too much. He knew that he would not be able to stop Groudon's sword and so, he would stop defending altogether.

Kohen then thought to himself, 'Girl, don't let me down.'

Kohen's expression was clear as he ignored the sword approaching him. He gave up his defensive style, passed the saber over to his left hand and resolutely held it in a reverse grip. He concentrated as he waited for the woman's arrival.

Sure enough, in the next moment, Jala threw the Wolf Limb Blade from her right hand at the aggressive Groudon! The flying Wolf Limb Blade shot straight towards the red-black swordsman's abdomen from the left.

With her right hand free, she rushed towards Kohen without slowing down.

In the next moment, Groudon's sword tip reached Kohen's chest area and the green longsword pierced into Kohen's abdomen! However, Jala's flying Wolf Limb Blade streaked across the air and slashed the left side of Groudon's chest.

Groudon roared. Kohen groaned in pain. Thanks to the interference from the Wolf Limb Blade, Groudon's thrust shifted a little to the side and missed the man's vitals.

The Glory of the Stars in his body to surged up swiftly in Kohen's body and accumulated around the flesh near the injury. Looking at the fierce eyes of the red-black swordsman, he then turned to look at the woman to his right while tenaciously enduring the pain.

He decided to believe in her. 'But what about her? Would she believe in me?'

Groudon snorted coldly and pulled out his sword, he then headed towards the approaching Jala.

In front of him, the police officer endured the pain in his chest and abdomen. The Glory of the Stars glimmered, and the saber in his left hand fell with a loud crash, stabbing into the ground below. It looked like the final struggles of a heavily injured swordsman.

Groudon seemed indifferent. An entirely different power of Eradication compared to Kohen's Glory of the Stars surged through his body. He readied his stance. With one move, he would be able to strike the young girl between her eyebrows.

'You cannot save him. As a result of your reckless actions, both of you will die together.'

However, Jala simply glanced at Groudon and she moved past Kohen, even bypassing Groudon to get behind Kohen!

Groudon was stunned for a moment. 'She did not want to save him?'

Jala did not choose to take advantage of this moment to attack Groudon by surprise; she knew that Groudon was already prepared to counterattack. Behind her, Ralf rapidly approached together with the wind. The woman knew that there was only one chance.

She then calmly extended her right hand—her survival would be in Kohen's hands. The police officer gritted his teeth.

Suddenly, he swung his right hand that was infused with the Glory of the Stars fiercely behind him.

'Now!'

He then saw Jala, who had just passed by his right side, grab his right hand in midair, like passing a baton in a relay race.

"AH!" Kohen roared. The remaining Glory of the Stars all over his body converged into blue glowing spots and gathered in his right arm. With that arm, he yanked Jala back!

The police officer's left hand held on to the saber stuck in the ground—it served as a pivot point. An unpleasant sound of friction could be heard from the tremendous momentum.

At the next moment, following the police using the saber as his support and pulling her back, the graceful Jala became like a flail. She swung in a semicircle in midair and due to Kohen's swing, landed on Groudon's other side. She had changed positions in an instant!

Jala held Kohen's hand as she would to her lover. Her Wolf Limb Blade in her left hand was held high above, with the blade pointed downwards, and the cold blade slashed downwards!

Shock appeared on Groudon's face.

'Her goal is... I see. She wanted to obtain the cop's cooperation, and while coordinating their strength together, they can instantly attack the side where I am undefended.' He pursed his lips indifferently. 'A great plan, but in the end, she's still just at ordinary class. She underestimated the skills of a supra class swordsman too greatly.'

The power of Eradication in his arm was swiftly activated. The green longsword began to move faster than usual as it swung to the right.

'Before you can strike, my sword wil- Eh?'

Groudon's expression froze momentarily. He saw Kohen grit his teeth and rush over before he used his body to block Groudon's saber. Sparks shot up.

Crack! Slash!

Groudon's shoulder bone was sliced off, and his abdomen was cut open. The Wolf Limb Blade slashed Groudon's right shoulder and tore through the right side of his chest.

Crack!

Kohen's right arm was dislocated and his right rib was lacerated. A large amount of blood from Groudon's shoulder gushed skywards and sprayed over Jala's face!

At this moment, Ralf's wind reached Kohen's side. Groudon opened his mouth and spat out blood in disbelief. Then, he laughed as though he had freed himself, and collapsed.

'What a great attack. What great teamwork.'

Groudon gently closed his eyes. Within a short moment, the terrifying red-black swordsman was slain by the unfamiliar, yet tacit, cooperation between Jala and Kohen.

The Phantom Wind Follower saw Groudon's fate. He could not believe that the Air Mystic's terrifying supra-class swordsman had the upper hand at one moment, and yet was so easily slain in the next.

However, he did not have time to be shocked, because Kohen roared and stomped with his feet, then he pulled the saber out from the ground with his left hand. Kohen turned to charge at Ralf regardless of his dislocated right hand. The light from the saber flashed.

Ralf laughed softly. 'How could you intercept the Phantom Wind Follower with this speed? Even while moving at high speeds, I can change directions at any mo- What?'

Ralf was surprised to see that Jala, who was beside Kohen, had knelt down on one knee and then crashed into Kohen's bosom. The police officer managed to turn around with a painful groan. However, he now shot towards Ralf at more than twice the speed from before!

'Damn! With this speed, it's impossible for me to—'

Ralf roared and deployed his Psionic power with all his strength! As the winds whistled, Ralf fished out his hidden blades from his sleeves to forcefully block the police officer's fatal strike.

However, Kohen's saber seemed as though it had a life of its own—it twisted and stabbed, suppressing Ralf relentlessly.

Their blades locked. One of the signature styles of the Swordsmen of Eradication was to lock an enemy's bladed weapon. Ralf then gave up all hope as he saw Jala, who was still with Kohen, pop her head out of his bosom with a grim look.

'No.'

While he was struggling to break away from Kohen's saber, the female bartender stretched out her right hand and crushed his throat with ease.

Two people and one corpse fell on the ground at the same time.

The police officer thought to himself, 'Fortunately, this Psionic had never been on a battlefield before. If he had pushed ahead instead of trying to fall back in the beginning, we would have died.'

Kohen spat blood out in a pathetic manner. His abdomen hurt and his right arm was dislocated. As a result, he was unable to get up.

"You... Who are you?" The police officer weakly asked the girl in his arms.

Jala had exhausted all of her energy and just laid there on his broad chest. She then turned her head and wiped off the blood on her face onto his uniform. The female bartender trembled slightly but still wore a relieved smile.

"None of your business." The young woman laughed as she replied but her eyes looked distressed.

'Brat. You should be able to escape.'

Boom!

At that moment, a muffled explosion was heard in the distance.

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"Qiren, one needs enthusiasm when conducting research. One must not be lazy. Learning is a lifetime of interest and diligence. When you reach my age, you could find yourself alienated. You would become unsociable, indifferent, and you would have difficulty finding enthusiasm.

"You will learn that the things supporting you, in the end, are not vanity, achievements, or contentment, but the speck of pure obsession you had in the beginning.

"So, you must understand Professor Chen's stubbornness and madness—That's probably the only obsession he has left in his life."

Thales shook his head. He kept another recalled piece of memory back into his head, and then pulled himself out of the rubble.

As the boy climbed out of the rubble, covered in blood, he looked up and saw Asda gazing down at him with a complicated expression.

The Air Mystic's clothes and long hair were still pretty and pristine. It was as though he had never experienced the explosion.

'Insane and paranoid,' Thales criticized silently. He was extremely exhausted and unable to continue resisting, so he simply turned to lie down in the rubble. He was a little tired of the lawless world where power was respected.

"You... Mystic, do whatever you like." Thales gasped and breathed heavily.

'A lunatic who kills people for a wrong word—no wonder the Mystics lost the war.'

Asda silently watched Thales with a strange expression. After a while, he emitted a peculiar laugh. "Hahaha, is this also a coincidence?"

The strange Mystic gently waved his right hand and lifted Thales up into the air, but did not attempt to kill him again.

He waved again and the atmospheric pressure began to change, instantly staunching all the boy's bleeding wounds.

Thales was helped up by the Mystic, his two feet touched the ground. However, the boy still looked at the Mystic with enmity; he no longer harbored any hope of holding any sort of rational conversation with Asda.

"Child, you had just used some kind of power to break my mystic barrier—the thing you called an 'Air Wall'," Asda softly said with an excited tone. "Only supreme class masters can do this, but you are only... Moreover, the power in your body could interfere and affect my mystic energy. Do you know what this means?"

"I don't even understand what you meant by supreme class." Thales replied weakly, "Even if I knew, I wouldn't want to tell a madman who just tried to kill me!"

Asda stopped smiling and gave him deep look. "Child, looks like you do not know your own nature. But never mind. Everyone will experience a first in losing control over themselves, and we all start from ignorance."

'Who would want to... Eh?'

Thales calmed down for a moment and thought about the meaning of Asda's words. He immediately looked up in surprise at the Mystic who had just tried to kill him.

"Experience a first in losing control over themselves?... We?"

Asda gazed at the child with the eyes of a fanatic. "Yes. We, Mystics."

Thales began to feel fear, for some unknown reason. Looking at the Mystic's fervent expression, he subconsciously took a step back and shook his head in terror.

However, the Mystic firmly stepped forward and spoke with a terrifying fervent, and insane tone, "Yes, child. What you said earlier is true. Your value in the future is worth my while to spare your... No, it is worthwhile for me to do my utmost to guide you! Child, what is your name?"

"Ever since we were betrayed by those two bitches and lost the Battle of Eradication, our numbers have become fewer! You will become the leading member that will help us turn this situation around. They will not even realize it..." Asda held his shoulders tightly as though afraid Thales would run away the moment he let go.

"I... I don't even know what you are..." Thales murmured and took a step back, but Asda held on to him tightly. Asda's smiling expression was rather morbid.

He was like a person who had not smiled for many years and had forgotten how to smile. He suddenly spread his lips wide, enough to reach his cheeks.

"Today is the day your fate turns." Asda said ecstatically, "Follow me..."

For some reason, Thales remembered the three 'human spheres' in the cellar. He also recalled the man trying to kill him in the basement. Seeing Asda's morbid smile, other than panic, he had a strange feeling.

'God.' Thales remembered Asda's strength and could not help but gulp, 'Mystic... But this... is a lunatic who kills without batting an eye. Should I go with him?'

Thales opened his mouth with much difficulty. "But..."

He had finally broken away from the Brotherhood; from being a beggar, after so much hardship.

"But..."

In the next moment, as though Errol heard his voice, he no longer needed to decide.

"You can say 'no', but you cannot refuse. This is only the first time you lose control. Every- Urgh!" Asda, who was still chattering away nonstop, suddenly had his expression freeze.

A smooth blade of a sword suddenly stabbed through Asda's chest. Asda lowered his head incredulously, looked at the blade sticking out of his chest, and let go of Thales.

Thales was also shocked. He took a few steps back, tripped on a plank of wood, and then fell to the ground. However, Thales did not see any fear, alarm, or bewildered emotions in the Mystic's eyes. It was as though the man had not been stabbed but bitten by a mosquito, and with an astounded expression, had asked, 'Why are there mosquitoes?'

He looked as though he did not even feel the pain.

'It obviously pierced his heart,' Thales thought in horror.

Asda stared at the blade strangely.

"Impossible." Asda frowned. He looked up and thought carefully before he spoke to the person behind him, "Even if you are a supreme class elite, it is impossible not to breathe; it is impossible not to move the air as you move; it is impossible for there to be no pressure in your body. As long as there is breathing, air flow, or pressure change, it is impossible to escape my detection.

"How long have you been in Red Street Market? How did you hide from my mystic powers? No, you could not break through the air wall either. Otherwise, you would have made your move in this room sooner, correct? Tell me."

There was no reply.

Asda looked belligerent as he turned around, ignoring the blade stuck in his back. He then coldly said to his attacker, "Tell me."

This time, Thales saw the person who attacked Asda. The attacker stood quietly. He was dressed in black clothing with a hood over his head, his gloves and boots were also in black.

Stranger still was that the attacker wore a dark purple mask. The mask had two dark lenses in the position of the eyes.

The man was motionless, like a ghost. At that moment, anger passed through Asda's thought, which was formed with mystic powers. After all, anger was a human emotion that had left him a long time ago. So the mystic power in his body surged. It quickly made him calm and rational again.

"I believe you must be very patient," Asda softly said. "You waited for my mystic power to become unstable. You perceived the drop in power and ambushed me?"

"Wonderful. You did it; you managed to ambush a Mystic." Asda ignored the blade in his chest and stared unwaveringly at the attacker wearing the strange mask.

"So, who are you? Did you accidentally discover me when you noticed the disturbance at Red Street Market? With this sort of skill... Which family are you from?"

A barrage of questions, but the masked man still remained silent.

Asda frowned. He had asked a lot of questions, but could not feel the air pressure in the strange man's body change. 'Could it be that he is neither surprised nor glad, and has no reaction at all to these questions?

'After hundreds of tests, my mystic air perception in mind reading is no longer effective? I can only use brute force.'

"Did you think this would kill me?"

Asda approached one step closer. He gently raised his left hand, his eyes expressionless. The air began to flow as his fingers moved, squeezing around the strange, masked man.

'This cannot spread beyond Red Street Market,' Asda thought to himself, 'If the Kingdom's Wrath or the Black Sword noticed this and rushed over, today's actions would be meaningless. Using a bit of mystic power is enough, I just need to deal with this masked man.'

This time, the masked man spoke, "No, a Mystic cannot be killed." His faint voice came through the mask.

"So you were neither dumb nor deaf." Asda gazed at the two lenses on the mask. However, he saw nothing except complicated machinery and gears behind the lenses.

Doubts rose in his heart. "You don't seem to be completely ignorant about us either..."

Thales almost exclaimed aloud. This was because the masked man's voice was the same hoarse voice that had been difficult to distinguish—it was the same voice that told him to lower his head during the fight between Jala and Ralf. With this in mind, Thales' trembling hands slowly began to calm down.

The masked man lightly stepped forward and went past Asda. It was as though the frightening air pressure could not even hinder him!

While the Air Mystic was caught off guard, the masked man stretched his hand out and pulled. The dagger disappeared from Asda's back and appeared in his hand.

It was a shortsword with a gleaming blade and a dark-hued cross on the cross-guard.

Asda became somber. It was unusual for him to be unable to respond. He glared at the uninvited guest coldly and took the current situation into account.

'What is he relying on? According to the intelligence updated yesterday, Judgment Spear is on the Western Frontline, the Motionless Bow is at the outskirts, and the Constellation Staff is at the Rejuvenation Palace. All that was left is the mysterious Supreme Sword and Shield. Supposedly, some say it is being kept away but others say it is at the Broken Dragon Fortress. The other anti-mystic equipment in Eternal Star City was also not enough to seal a supreme class Mystic.

'So why is this masked man still so calm?'

Thales could barely believe what he saw. When the masked man had taken out the dagger from Asda's back, the wound that should have been bleeding emitted a small

blue light.

The light turned into his clothes, appearing like new. It was as though he had never been stabbed in the chest.

'A Mystic.' Thales started to believe in Asda's insane words. 'What kind of monster is a Mystic?'

Before Thales had time to clearly think about this, he was shrouded by a figure. The strange, masked man walked in front of Thales. Before the boy could react, he had already enclosed him in an embrace.

Thales struggled but the masked man lightly held the back of his neck. The boy felt his strength slowly disappear and became limp in his arms.

In a daze, Thales saw Asda lift both his hands up in the corner of his eyes. "Hey, be careful of his—"

The boy wanted to speak but the masked man had covered his mouth. Asda stood behind them, no longer intending to continue observing.

'This boy is too important.'

"Since you know Mystics cannot be killed, why did you act?" Asda's mystic energy started to move, he gathered the air within fifty meters around him. "You cannot be a True Class but you should at the very least be at the peak of Supreme Class. You even have a way of hiding from Mystics."

With a nasty expression, Asda waved both his hands. Thales then felt the surrounding air pressure change.

The Air Mystic was about to attack.

"But no matter who you are—" Asda's words were then interrupted by the terror in his eyes. "This! What is this?!"

Following this interruption was also a change in the surrounding air pressure. Thales looked across the shoulder of the masked man and saw that Asda looked frightened. The Mystic trembled and took a few steps back, a purple light shone from where he had been stabbed. This was the first time Thales saw alarm in the Mystic's eyes.

The masked man lowered his head towards Thales and his hoarse voice echoed, "A Mystic cannot be killed, but they are not invincible."

For some reason, Thales suddenly felt calm. He felt much safer with the strange person compared to the lunatic behind. The alarmed Asda looked terrified as he covered his chest. It was as though the purple light was about to explode from there.

"No. No..." He then looked back up at the masked man. Fear and hatred were evident on his face. "This is... the Sovereign State's... legendary, anti-mystic equipment!"

The masked man reached out and covered Thales' eyes.

"This weapon... I have never seen this before... No... No... Those two bitches..."

Thales could not hear the rest of Asda's flustered words because as Asda gritted his teeth resentfully, he turned into hundreds of light rays, and then exploded into a burst of unlimited energy. Thales felt as though he had entered another space where all the light and sound had disappeared from his senses.

He knew he was already far away from Red Street Market, and that the night was over.

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When Jala awoke, she found herself being carried on solid shoulders. Both sides of the street slowly retreated. She became aware of her situation and impatiently hit the back of this familiar man.

"Hey, Edmund! Let me down! I still need to go back!"

The fat cook snorted impatiently. "Let you go back to that pretty boy? The cop? What if Big Sis knew... hehe..."

Jala's face turned red. "That cop is not my lover!"

"I clearly saw you lying in his arms. That look of happiness..."

"Did you not pay attention to our surroundings?"

"I did! It was dark and windy, late at night, amidst the flowers in the moonlight, a rendezvous between..."

"Your main point is wrong, fatty!"

"Whether I am wrong or not, we will know in the future."

"Sigh. I don't want to talk nonsense with you, I still need to look for someone..."

"Everything is like this now. Don't expect me to let you go back."

"Damn fatty! Lousy cook! Let me down! I want to challenge you to a battle!"

"Fight with you? You are only amazing as an ordinary class. Come back to me once you reach supra class."

"Ha... I really have someone important to find."

"Don't tell me it's a cop. Even if you want to look for a prince, it is useless!"

"Damn fatty! Still harping on this issue? Sheesh! Can you just let me down? Pretty please? Uncle Edmund..."

"You're already twenty and still acting spoiled? Do you think you are still a little girl? Don't you feel shame?"

"Why would I? Uncle, you are already forty but don't you also act like you're three years old?"

"Hmph. Mentally, I am still a young man... Eh? Something is not right with that sentence."

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At the same time, on the other side of the street in the distance, Kohen was awakened by a slap in the face.

While dazed, he realized that the person in front of him was his immediate superior, the police chief, Lorbec Deira. But this time, the chief looked concerned as he treated Kohen's serious injuries. When Lorbec noticed that Kohen had regained consciousness, he said angrily, "Has the hero woken up? Did you manage to eliminate the Brotherhood and the Blood Bottle Gang after your stroll?"

"I..."

"How dare you? You openly disobeyed orders and acted on your own! Are you proud of yourself?"

"But..."

"But what? If it was not because I wanted to save your father's reputation, I would have already shot you! Or do you think we came to look for you when we saw the sword beams?"

"Bu—"

"But what? I really have the world's worst luck to have a subordinate like you! Do you think you are the protagonist of the Dark Night Temple's drama? Then that girl just now must be the female lead?"

"She..."

"Do not mention that girl! If your father knew you came to the Red Street Market in the middle of the night to look for women..."

"No..."

"How can you still speak without shame? Even the hot favorite of the Laya Club, Miss Lilian, reported that you visited her in her bedroom in the middle of the night."

"That..."

"Security Captain, Class Two police officer, openly violated orders to seek pleasure at night! You better be prepared for a suspension when you return!"

"Ha..."

At this moment, another loud noise carried from the center of the Red Street Market.

Boom!

The whole city heard the terrible explosion.

Boom!

This time, the explosion sent shockwaves reverberating into the sky. Hot dust from the explosions suddenly flew in from afar. Chief Lorbec and the dejected Kohen were astonished as they stared at the center of Red Street Market.

"This is bad." The chief muttered, "The funds that had just been approved for construction..."

"Chief, what is with that evaluation?"

"Those who don't manage money or family, just shut up!"

On the other side of the street, the cook Edmund and Jala, who was on his shoulders, were both shocked by the aftermath of the explosion.

"Little Jala," Edmund muttered, "luckily we ran quickly and are far away."

"Is that the point?"

"Didn't Big Sister say 'safety first'?"

"You... are really my three-year-old uncle!"

"Hey, how can you speak like that?"

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When Thales' feet touched the ground again, he fell onto the floor and coughed. All his wounds began to feel painful at that moment. The strange, masked man stood still by the side as though nothing had happened.

"Asda... Is the Mystic dead?"

"No, the weapon is not perfect and cannot seal him permanently," The hoarse voice replied. "However, he should not reappear for at least a dozen years."

Thales' heart tightened at first, and then calmed down. The Mystic was crazy and

extremely abnormal. The impression he had was too profound.

'Ten years is enough to come up with countermeasures.'

Thales suddenly looked up and remembered something. "I still have a companion. She protected me..."

"She is alright," The hoarse-voiced person seemed to understand his thoughts and immediately replied. "Right now, she is on her way back to the Lower City District."

Thales breathed a sigh of relief and then collapsed. However, he immediately remembered an extremely important detail. "You... Sir..." Thales asked with the greatest care after remembering his previous contact with the Mystic, "Who are you?"

Thales did not have high expectations of a secretive, masked man to give him a friendly reply. However, the next scene almost caused his jaw to drop to the ground.

The masked man still had a murderous look the previous moment, but he suddenly took a step back and placed his right hand on the left side of his chest, while his left hand was placed behind his waist as he knelt down on one knee.

The man then respectfully and solemnly replied, "My name is Yodel Cato. I am at your service."

Chapter 16

The Dawn, Blood and Lights

When a second, larger explosion sounded from the center of Red Street Market, Morris, Layork, and the others had escaped from the Blood Bottle Gang members, who could not coordinate due to a chaotic command. From a distance, they saw Cenza, who was circling around with Kirks the Clown.

Cenza was almost two meters in height, but he did not look skinny and was strong and sturdy. His dark skin tone, yellowing straight hair, and frosty countenance made him look slightly somber, but all the elders in the Brotherhood knew that, apart from the three main Assassins, the 'Crownless Fist' Cenza Myron—who was also the head of the six Powerhouses—was the most dependable person in the Brotherhood. No, most of the time, he was even more dependable than the three main Assassins.

"You call this a Psionic Ability?" Cenza said disdainfully as he coldly watched 'Flying Blade Clown' Kirks jump around the roofs, continuously shooting flying blades from his bottomless dimensional-pocket.

'Morris, Adrienessa and Layork, one supra class, two other great fighters in the ordinary class, and an unknown amount of other people.' One of Blood Bottle Gang's eight Psionic Warriors, the 'Flying Blade Clown' Kirks, thought as he crouched on a roof and watched with a grave expression on his face as more powerful fighters from the Brotherhood gathered together.

The Blood Bottle Gang elites who were his subordinates had been completely massacred.

There was also Cenza, who was almost up to supreme class.

Blood Bottle Gang's reinforcements were nowhere to be seen. There was no news at all from the two supra class fighters, Song and Roubaix, and neither was there any news from Ralf. He had lost contact with Solo for the past ten minutes, and that coward, Tinker, was probably hiding in the dark and observing the situation. Rumeno should have been the one responsible for Cenza, but since Cenza was completely fine, Rumeno was probably already at hell's river, waiting to be transported to the other

side by the ferryman.

Even worse, after the Air Wall disappeared with the explosion, the Air Mystic's orders had been absent for a long time.

Kirks' contemplation did not last too long.

Behind Cenza, one of the Brotherhood's thirteen Generals—the Northlander, 'Steel Pricker' Adrienessa—clenched his teeth. He nonchalantly threw a human head that Cenza had just obtained onto the floor. That head belonged to a supreme class Psionic Warrior and Puppet Master from Mane et Nox Dynasty [1] in the Eastern Peninsula—the 'Divine Chaos Soldier', Song.

The Clown contemplated for a while and took out two throwing knives from his dimensional pocket. He then placed an oxygen tube in his mouth in order to defend against Morris' Psionic Abilities. At the same time, he also made a decision to leave the place immediately.

Under these circumstances, even the Air Mystic cannot blame him for his decision.

But the next moment, Kirks was shocked to see Cenza's fist speeding towards his face.

'Since when was Cenza's speed so fast?'

However, he immediately saw a plump figure behind Cenza—it was Morris, who was tightly clenching his teeth and activating his Psionic Ability.

'He did not remove all the air around me. The Clown thought in shock and despair. But... removed all the air around Cenza?'

When the Air Wall disappeared after the first explosion, Morris knew that there would be unexpected changes in the situation on that night. And when the second shocking explosion sounded from far away, Morris managed to react. It was time to strike back.

Without making a single sound, he firmly removed all the air on the path between Cenza and Kirks.

Cenza felt the change in his surroundings. This boxer—who had worked together with Morris for years—immediately held his breath and threw a punch. Without the burden of air resistance, and with a speed that was a few times faster than usual, he

hurled his punch forward!

The battle did not continue for long.

Cenza easily caught both of Kirks' throwing knives. He then used his continuous, relentless, accurate and fearsome iron fist to break apart the Psionic Space that Kirks depended on. The Clown depended on this Psionic Space to fend off long-distance attacks. He also came well-prepared with oxygen supplies and throwing knives, causing Morris to be unable to do anything about him for some time. At that moment, his Psionic Space shattered, Layork was already standing quietly behind Cenza.

Morris, who had just finished using his Psionic Ability, bent and panted while holding his knees. His fat cheeks wobbled. He did not look at the Clown again—whose death was certain—but turned to Cenza and said, "The second... the second explosion came from deep within Red Street Market. An accident unknown to... to us must have happened. But no matter what, as the Air Wall has stopped working, something must... must have happened to the Air Mystic! Besides, we have retreated far enough, and our people have almost... almost fully assembled." Morris recovered his breath and sized up the situation with his experience. "Both Song and Kirks were defeated here. If this is a bait from them, the scrumptiousness of this bait is enough for us to give this battle our all!"

Layork ignored Kirks' pleading and coolly sliced opened the latter's neck—which was covered in greasepaint. He then nodded and said, "After the road was cleared, the front line reported that they have discovered 'Phantom Wind Follower' Ralf's dead body. At the back line, Sir Lance sent news regarding Lassbyn and Dorno's deaths. Once we add in Kirks' death to the mix, the enemy's battle power in Eternal Star City has been reduced by half."

In response to this, Cenza put down his smoldering fist. His response was short. "Then let's fight back!"

And so, the dawn in Red Street Market was welcomed with the color of blood.

When Nayer Rick—who was the logistics director Lance assigned—saw Morris and Cenza return, drenched in blood at the intersection between XC District and Red Street Market, the sky was almost bright.

Morris tapped his shoulder and exhaled. He spoke, smiling, "Although there were some

ups and downs during the process... Red Street Market is ours now."

"Of course, just as expected," Rick answered with a smile. In his heart, he was thinking about ways to repay the child beggars who had escaped from the Abandoned Houses and about Quide's death.

At least that ghost won't be coming anymore. Rick thought and gazed across the crowds to look at the mysterious cloaked figure. And, with Sir Lance's promise, I won't be demoted too badly.

'The Silent Assassin' Layork did not even look at Rick. He walked past Rick and, paying no heed to his blood-covered face, enveloped Felicia—who was walking towards him from behind Rick—in an embrace.

"Wow, you are still alive?" Without looking the slightest bit worried, Felicia chuckled.

"Apart from you, who else is able to kill me?" Layork grinned ferociously and kissed the woman hard on her lips.

"Has anyone seen Edmund?" Cenza's voice rang from the crowds. "Without him, it wouldn't have been so easy for me to defeat the 'Divine Chaos Soldier'!"

"That damn cook." Seeing that no one answered, he cursed fiercely, "He runs away whenever it's time to drink!"

On the sixteenth of November in the year 672 of the Calendar of Eradication in Errol, a bloody and cruel 'overnight battle' erupted between the two tyrants in the underground world of Constellation—the Western Peninsula's second-largest kingdom.

It was a disproportionate battle. In the beginning, Black Street Brotherhood stepped into Blood Bottle Gang's ambush and trap. However, the result of the bloody battle left many in shock.

Indeed, Black Street Brotherhood suffered two hundred and fourteen casualties along with three hundred and sixty-seven injured. Among the thirteen Generals, nine participated in the battle and seven of them died. The other two, Morris and Cenza, who were part of the Powerhouses, battled until the end and survived.

In contrast, Blood Bottle Gang, the 'Nobility among Gangs', had suffered the biggest

defeat in their history. They suffered four hundred and forty-five casualties, and two hundred and ninety injured. Among the Strongest Twelve, ten of them participated in the battle, and eight of them died. All five of the eight Psionic Warriors who participated in the battle had died. There were even rumors that Air Mystic who appeared openly for the first time in more than ten years had gone missing.

That night, the explosion in the center of Red Street Market almost woke every single resident of the capital, Eternal Star City. Among the innocent civilians in Red Street Market, one thousand two hundred and twenty-nine were affected by the explosion. Among them, two hundred and seventy-five died in the explosion, four hundred and thirty-eight were injured, and five hundred and sixteen of them lost their homes.

Red Street Market, especially its central area, was severely damaged. The incident was even mentioned by the capital city's Chief Garrison during the following day's Imperial Conference. Its position in the agenda was only behind the discussion of 'Tax Exemption for the Opening Up of Border Counties' and the reception of the Eckstedt Diplomats. In the end, the Imperial Conference instructed the Western City Police station to take quick action towards "subsiding conflicts and preventing private battles among the people."

Ever since then, Red Street Market changed hands. The Brotherhood's forces penetrated through the entire Western District. The balance of power in Constellation's underground world began tilting completely towards Black Street Brotherhood.

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However, what many people did not know was, on that night, another huge incident—which would alter the future fate of Constellation—happened at the same time.

Being carried in Yodel's arms in an embarrassing position—masked weirdo, masked weirdo, masked weirdo! Thales kept consecutively repeating this in his heart three times at once as he was transported across districts completely unknown to him at extreme speed.

Thales felt he could not keep quiet anymore.

"Can you say it again—the reason you were looking for me?" The transmigrator asked in pain as he stared at the breaking dawn in the distant sky.

"To reunite you with your father," Yodel said respectfully. He lowered his body and placed his finger on the surface of a river, causing a ripple as they passed through a bridge's archway.

Thales rolled his eyes. "And who are you?"

"Your father's secret protector," Yodel said respectfully as they passed a tall watchtower. Although a full-sized adult just shot past with a child, the guard in the watchtower did not even blink his eyes.

Thales heaved a sigh. "Did you get it wrong? I'm only an escaping child beggar!"

"Absolutely not. This is the will of God." Yodel said respectfully and stepped on a gold store's signage. The signboard—hung up with iron chains—did not even shake.

Thales was about to go mad. "Who on earth is my father?"

"An important person whom I deeply respect," Yodel said respectfully and shot past a white eagle that was hunting a swallow. His speed shocked both birds.

Thales lost all hope. 'What is he trying to do with this rhetoric answer which does not reveal any important information but makes others go "Wow, he's so polite, it will be embarrassing to press him further?"' Thales gave up.

'When they realize that they got it wrong,' Thales thought quietly, 'they won't kill me to prevent me from divulging their secrets, right?'

The transmigrator tilted his head and waited for the sun to rise. He asked, spiritless, "Yodel?"

"Yes?"

"Don't tell me that you originally used to engage in diplomacy."

"No."

"What a waste. With the way you speak, it's really quite suitable for you."

"Thank you for your acknowledgment."

It was as though Yodel could not sense Thales' sarcasm and continued speaking respectfully.

He flipped over a tall wall and, like a spider, quietly landed on an avenue with intricate flower beds on both sides.

Then, Yodel stopped, out of Thales' expectations.

In front of their eyes was a plain but stately carriage.

In front of the carriage, a middle-aged man with grayish-white hair holding a lamp walked slowly towards them.

Yodel put Thales down softly.

As the transmigrator landed on the floor, he suddenly turned and looked at Yodel. He looked slightly... um, unhappy?

The middle-aged man approached. With the help of the light from the man's lamp, Thales could not help but realize that he was wearing clothes that were plain but stately.

The middle-aged man had a wide lower jaw which made him look kind. The short mustache above his lips was neatly kept. Although he was showing respectfulness, his two tall cheekbones made him look a little stern. Yet, the bridge of his nose looked a little soft, which gave him a very gentle air as well.

'This is probably a really complicated person,' Thales thought quietly.

The man raised his black, gloved right hand, and tipped his cylindrical hat, bowing slightly.

"Good morning." Compared to Yodel's hoarse and solemn voice, his was steady and reassuring.

'This person is a noble, a high-ranked noble.' Thales concluded. 'Could he be?'

But the words from Yodel from behind him made behind him made him retract the thought.

The masked man spoke in a calm, but impertinent tone, "Why are you here?"

The middle-aged noble nodded softly, smiled, and answered without taking the other's tone to heart, "To ensure that nothing goes wrong."

"He does not trust me?" Even Thales could hear the dissatisfaction in Yodel's voice.

"He trusts you very much, to the point that he is willing to entrust you with the life of his kin." The middle-aged noble slowly said, "But I do not trust you, and you know why."

Thales felt as though there was a surge of electricity running between Yodel and the middle-aged noble!

Yodel kept quiet for a moment and, unexpectedly, did not speak any further.

The middle-aged noble did not look at Yodel anymore, but slowly crouched down and flashed an appropriate smile. "Child," he said to Thales, "I know that your life had been difficult thus far."

The middle-aged noble looked at the scars and wounds on Thales' body. He took the glove off his right hand and extended the hand to caress Thales' wounds. Every time his hand touched a wound, his brows knitted slightly.

"I am very sorry. But child, please trust that after one more procedure, your misfortune will come to an end."

Thales, who was a little unfamiliar with this, was about to say something when the middle-aged noble put down the lamp in his hand and held the transmigrator's right hand, then he took out an intricate sheathed dagger from his bosom.

Thales instinctively wanted to inch backward, but his right hand was caught tightly by the middle-aged noble!

"What are you trying to do—" Thales asked anxiously. The middle-aged noble looked at him with a resolute look, and without letting go with his hand, drew out the dagger slowly.

Snap!

It was Yodel.

He bent down, extended his hands and pressed hard on the middle-aged noble's shoulder. Through the mask, Thales could not see Yodel's face clearly. But somehow, he was very grateful towards "his father's secret protector".

There was no other reason. He had seen too much blood and too many blades tonight.

"Yodel!" The middle-aged noble looked as though he was very displeased. He raised his head and knitted his brows while speaking in a low voice that allowed no grounds for refusing. "You know that this is a necessity!"

Thales raised his head and looked at Yodel. He felt quite anxious, although he knew vaguely that the middle-aged noble did not intend to harm him.

"Then use his own dagger!" Yodel said coldly.

The middle-aged noble stared at Yodel. At that moment, his gaze looked as though it was filled with ice.

After a long time, the middle-aged noble compromised. He nodded and returned the dagger to his bosom. Having seen this, Yodel let go of the middle-aged noble's shoulders.

"Do not be anxious, child." The middle-aged noble turned his gaze back to Thales. His tone was gentle again. "I am only getting a small blood sample."

Thales looked at him. The middle-aged noble's gaze was very gentle but determined.

The transmigrator nodded his head. Awaiting his fate.

The middle-aged noble extended his hand and took JC's dagger, which was wrapped in a piece of cloth and had no sheath, from Thales' leg. He warmed it up on the lamp for a while. Then, without causing Thales much pain, the middle-aged noble used JC's dagger to prick the middle finger of his right hand and removed a drop of blood.

'What is he trying to do? With this world's level of technology, can they even run DNA tests? What if the test reveals my true identity?'

Under Thales' curious and apprehensive gaze, the middle-aged noble gently dropped

the drop of blood on the floor.

The next moment, Thales felt the surge of a familiar burning sensation. It poured in from his chest, his blood vessels, his muscles, and then his entire body.

"Ah!" He could not help but shout.

But the middle-aged noble's gaze was not on him. Thales turned his head and followed the middle-aged noble's excited gaze—he was looking at the lamp he put down beside him.

Boom!

The previously still lamp was now burning rapidly and violently! The flame became bigger and bigger, and the flame's heart turned from orangey-yellow to bright blood-red!

The flame tilted towards his direction.

Thales suddenly understood something: The fresh blood which dropped onto the floor. The flame's heart, which was reddening and increasing in size...

A surge of fear suddenly appeared in Thales' heart. He turned his head to look at Yodel as if he was pleading for help.

He saw that the masked man was putting his hand into his bosom to procure a glass bottle from his chest. There was a small flame inside.

It was a kindle.

At this moment, the flame's heart within the glass bottle was bright red like blood, and it was skewed slightly to the side.

Thales turned and looked at the lamp on the floor, then at the tinder in Yodel's hand, then at the blood on the floor. His face paled.

It took a long time for the flame in the lamp to return to normal.

"Impossible..." he muttered.

"It was only when I reached Red Street Market that I was sure that you are the one," Yodel said hoarsely.

The middle-aged noble seemed to be very excited. He carefully put away JC's dagger, which was in his hand and spoke respectfully. "Now—"

However, the transmigrator cut him off with his actions. Thales clenched his teeth and aggressively held his right hand's middle finger with his left hand. He squeezed the tiny wound hard, and a few more drops of blood fell onto the floor!

Puff!

The flame of the lamp, which was on the floor became bigger and bright red again.

"This was a divine Art placed by Head Ritual Master Liscia twelve years ago. The moment your blood drops onto the floor of the capital city, the Bloodline Lamp will light up from dormancy," the middle-aged noble spoke, trembling.

Thales suddenly understood.

On the day he was beaten up by Quide, his blood fell onto the floor.

On the day Quide massacred the child beggars, his blood fell onto the floor.

When he hit the Air Wall, his blood fell onto the floor.

When Asda tried to kill him using mystic energy, his blood, again, fell onto the floor.

Thales helplessly heaved a sigh. He suddenly felt like laughing out loud.

Translator's Note:

[1] Mane et Nox Dynasty: Is the Latin version for Day and Night Dynasty, except for the word Dynasty. The English version was a little underwhelming, so the Latin version was chosen.

Chapter 17

End of Arc: Kingdom's Bloodline

'An accident... ' Thales lowered his head. A deep, helpless feeling rose in his heart. 'Disaster strikes unexpectedly.'

During that instant, the Air Mystic's smile—Thales had never been able to tell whether it was real or fake—appeared in Thales' head as he spoke to him, "Look, this is what it means to be a 'coincidence'."

Yodel quietly put away the kindling.

The middle-aged noble calmed his excitement, then gently patted Thales' head as he looked at him.

"It will be alright, child, I am Gilbert Caso. You can trust me, just like how your father trusts me. Come, child, I will take you home... to see your father."

Thales took a full minute to recover from of his daze.

It did not matter whether it was Yodel or Gilbert. Both of them waited patiently while he was in his absent-minded state.

"Let's go." When Thales lifted his head, his gaze had already calmed.

Gilbert nodded his head with praise in his eyes. He stood and gestured in the direction of the carriage.

Thales turned his head and looked at Yodel. "Yodel, you'll come with me as well, right?"

"Of course." Yodel's hoarse voice rang in the air, yet it was incredibly soothing when it fell onto Thales' ears. "Please head on first, I'll be right beside you."

Thales sucked in a deep breath and took large strides to the carriage, "Mr. Gilbert."

"Yes, Young Sir, what is it?"

"What did you do previously?"

"I was working in the Foreign Affairs Department, my young Sir Thales."

'Foreign Affairs Department?' Thales turned his head a little and rolled his eyes at Yodel, at an angle Gilbert could not see.

Thales turned his head back forwards. For some unknown reason, he had a vague feeling that Yodel had smiled behind his mask.

Thales moved to stand before the carriage. The carriage was simple but obviously expensive. The glass on the black coach was adorned with Crystal Drops.

The two large horses that were pure black in color were quietly chewing at their bridles. One of them affectionately leaned towards Gilbert.

As he looked at the high footboard, Thales began comparing his seven-year-old body to it and felt a little glum.

Before he turned his head, Gilbert, who was beside him, pulled open the carriage door and carried him inside, placing him on the dark red carriage sofa.

"I deeply apologize, we do not have a boarding stool." Gilbert smiled apologetically and closed the carriage door. "But I guarantee that this would be the last time."

Thales sat alone on the wide sofa. He did not know what material it was made of, and although it was very comfortable, he felt a little restless.

The coach's four corners were illuminated with luminous paint, allowing him to somewhat see the decorations in the coach. At the back of the coach was a picture of a star framed in a circular picture frame, and it was set firmly there.

'One, two, three, four, five... nine.' The star has nine points. Thales quietly thought to himself, 'This is a nine-pointed star.'

Before he recovered from his absent-minded state, the carriage had moved.

Thales crawled to the carriage window. It was daybreak, and the scenery outside the carriage window could not be seen clearly yet.

So, Thales sat back down on the sofa in boredom.

"Yodel, are you there?" He probingly asked.

A reply immediately voiced beside his ears. "Yes."

Thales was taken aback. He sat up and looked around. However, apart from Gilbert who was driving the carriage, there was no one else both in and outside the coach.

'Nevermind, I'm used to it anyway.'

Thales sat back down on the sofa and continued asking, "Where are we now?"

"Mindis Hall is straight ahead." The hoarse voice sounded again.

'Min- min- mindy- mindisy? Whatever, I wouldn't know it anyway. Who would've thought that a few hours ago, I was still in the Abandoned House, bleeding for the sake of survival, and getting injured for the sake of escape in Red Street Market? And now?'

Thales tapped the sofa beneath him, wondering who his father in this life was.

'Who cares? I'll cross that bridge when I come to it. I've even run into that bizarre, immortal existence known as a Mystic, what else can possibly scare me?'

The transmigrator exhaled. He suddenly felt a little warm and tore down the tattered clothes on his chest.

He accidentally tore at the wound on his chest.

Thales hissed and looked at the burn wound on his chest.

On the edge of the wound Quide burned, he could vaguely see a circle of flourished ancient words printed in an inverted manner.

'This is... A King does not gain respect by virtue of his bloodline.' Thales recalled the words on that silver coin.

He tapped his forehead suddenly.

'Mindis... Mindis Silver Coin? Isn't that... isn't that Constellation's great king of the

generation? Wait, Mindis Hall?'

The carriage stopped suddenly.

Gilbert respectfully invited him to exit the carriage when Thales was still at a loss for what to do due to his head being in a muddled mess.

Outside the carriage, there was an intricate little garden. It was paved with solid bricks made of a material Thales did not recognize. In the middle of the garden, there was an intricate fountain, and water was gushing out of a stone dragon's mouth, which had its mouth open to roar at the sky.

Thales turned his head in a daze and looked towards the big, black, iron doors in the garden. The black iron doors seemed to be embossed with reliefs. Thales did not recognize any of the depictions on it. However, two large flags were erected on either side of the iron door and fluttered along to the wind.

The flags were blue with white outlines at the edges. There were two silver cross-shaped stars overlapping with each other on both flags. One of the stars was larger than the other, and the smaller star was located at the bottom right of the larger star.

Thales recognized the flag. On the Western City Gate, the flag that fluttered at the highest height had that pattern on it.

Blue with a white outline, two silver cross-shaped stars—Constellation's flag.

The two flags in the garden had an additional tiny nine-pointed star that had silver alternating with gold sewn to the bottom left corner of the big silver cross-shaped star. There were four golden points and five silver points in the star. That was the same pattern engraved on the back of the carriage.

Thales snapped out of his daze. Before him stood a magnificent three-story building. Eight intricately carved pillars supported the large balcony on the first floor. Light shone from one of the windows in the middle of the second floor.

The house's main door was made of cedar wood. Thales once saw a furniture merchant selling a large cedar wood square table for the price of fifty gold coins at the grand bazaar beside the Western City Gate.

Of course, in the end, he "voluntarily" sold the square table at the discounted price of

one gold coin to Black Street Brotherhood.

Thales followed Gilbert while his head was still in a mess. Yodel had offered to carry him when he spread his arms wide open, but Thales declined. He persevered and endured the pain from the wounds all over his body along with his fatigue while walking through the large cedar wood door with great difficulty.

The entrance and the hall, including the corridor leading to a spiral stairway, were illuminated by large, gorgeous Everlasting Lamp stands that burned with Eternal Oil. Fully armed guards stood in the corridor while keeping watch with utmost concentration. It was as though every single guard was meticulously chosen because their heights were uniform. They were all fully equipped with swords, shields, and bows, and all their metal shields had the gold-and-silver-colored nine-pointed star on them.

Thales held the rails beside the stairs and slowly walked up to the first floor.

On the first floor, three painted portraits hung on the wall facing the house's main entrance.

In the middle was a young knight who had a valiant and powerful posture. He held a long spear and was in a charging position. His face was handsome, and his expression was heroic. The silver crown on his head had seven stars on it. Against the backdrop of the horrifying battlefield, he charged forward fearlessly.

The left portrait was of a warrior with a powerful physique wielding a sword and shield—the shield had a silver nine-pointed star. The crown on his head had nine stars on it. His face was determined and extraordinarily valiant. The background was a lush, green tree that towered into the sky.

The right portrait was of a kind and benevolent middle-aged man. He was sitting in the portrait. Behind him was a brightly lit city. His left hand held a valuable scepter that was mounted with bright blue crystals. In his right hand was a thick book, and there were five different pictures showing things such as the sun, stars, and the moon.

The three nobles had different temperaments, but it looked like the artist managed to capture their individual charm. Thales looked at the portraits in a daze. It was as though they were there in person.

It seemed like they were truly a great noble family with an extensive legacy.

Unfortunately, Thales did not recognize any of them

'Wait, why is that handsome middle-aged man so familiar?'

Thales was about to lift his clothes to take a look at the head portrait burned into his chest when the sound of steady footsteps appeared.

"This is Tormond the First, the last prince of the Final Empire, and the founder of Constellation. Known as the 'King of Renaissance, his bravery in the Battle of Eradication is still being eulogized even now.

"The one on the left is Midier the Fourth, the battle companion of Chara the Hero, and Kaplan the Prophet, the protector of the Sacred Tree. Known as the 'Oath Keeper'. He married the Elf Queen, and from then onwards, the Jadestar royal family possessed elf blood.

"Last but not least is Mindis the Third. Known as 'The Wise King', every single person, from nobles to priests, and even from merchants to beggars, praised him for his wise governance."

The voice was steady and authoritative. It traveled forward in a low tone, but it sounded like thunder hidden within clouds. That voice shook in the air faintly.

Gilbert and Yodel, who were behind Thales, kneeled down on a single knee in unison. Thales gulped and raised his head gently.

A robust figure walked slowly towards him. His mighty and resolute face reminded the transmigrator of the sword-and-shield warrior on the left portrait on the wall.

He was a muscular noble with black hair, a tall nose, deep-set eyes, a broad face, and was in the prime of his life. The gaze in his sky-blue irises was as piercing as swords. The noble held a scepter in his left hand. He stood before Thales and scrutinized him.

A little dumbfounded, Thales stared back at the noble in front of him. He began feeling uncontrollably anxious.

Even if he had lived twice, no one had ever taught him how to act during these moments.

The robust noble scrutinized him for a long time, so long that Thales started feeling

embarrassed. However, to Thales, his gaze did not feel cordial or calming at all. In contrast, it made him feel heavily pressured and slightly out of breath.

To put it unpleasantly, even Asda Sakern's crazed gaze felt better than this.

However, the transmigrator suddenly noticed that the robust noble in front of him wore a crown that looked similar to the crown with nine stars worn by the sword-and-shield-wielding warrior. Whereas, no matter how Thales looked at it, the scepter in his left hand was the exact replica of the blue crystal-studded scepter held by the middle-aged man in the right-hand portrait.

Beside him, Gilbert reminded in a low voice, "Child, this is your father."

"Father?" he could not help but mutter. Thales lowered his eyes and looked at the astral blue cloak worn on the man's back.

His father's face from his past life slowly appeared in his mind, but it was a little blurry.

Thales sucked in a deep breath and refocused his gaze.

"Who are you?" He heard his own voice ringing in the air in a flat tone.

The robust noble did not speak, he only frowned.

At that moment, Gilbert lifted his head. With a voice that allowed no room for doubt, filled with authority and respect, he spoke with a solemn tone.

"This is Kessel Mindis Aydi Jadestar, King Kessel the Fifth in the family. He is the legitimate descendant of the royal family in the Final Empire, and he is the heir who will resurrect King Tormund.

"He is the suzerain of the Western Peninsula's Rudollians and Northlanders, the conqueror of the Dragon Skeleton Throne and the Desert God's Altar.

"He is the guardian of the sacred tree and Sera Dukedom, the guard of Steel City and the Alliance of Freedom.

"He is the Iron Hand, the thirty-ninth Supreme King of Constellation, the Southern Islands, and the Western Deserts."

Thales felt as a chill rise within his heart, and his breathing quickened. A suffocating pressure that seemed to possess corporeal form pressed down on him.

Kessel looked at Thales with a profound gaze. After some time, he turned his head and looked at Gilbert and Yodel, who were beside Thales.

The robust King Kessel the Fifth spoke clearly and slowly with his deep and sonorous voice, "So he is my descendant, the kingdom's bloodline? The last and only remaining kin of our bloodline in all of Constellation?"



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